This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

WORKS

OF

REV. DR. CHANNING,

IN

SIX VOLUMES

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D

TWELFTH COMPLETE EDITION,

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:
CROSBY, NICHOLS, AND COMPANY.
NEW YORK:
C. S. FRANCIS AND COMPANY.
1853.

Hosted by Google

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1843, by
GEORGE G. CHANNING,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

Printed by
MUNROE AND FRANCIS
Boston.

Hosted by Google

CONTENTS OF VOL. I

REMARKS ON THE CHARACTER AND WRITINGS OF JOHN MILTON. — (From the CHRISTIAN EXAMINER for 1826.) 3

REMARKS ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE. — (From the CHRISTIAN EXAMINER for 1827-28):

PART I. 69

PART II. 137

REMARKS ON THE CHARACTER AND WRITINGS OF FENELON — (From the CHRISTIAN EXAMINER for 1829.) 167

THE MORAL ARGUMENT AGAINST CALVINISM. — (From the CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE for 1820.) 217

REMARKS ON NATIONAL LITERATURE. 243

REMARKS ON ASSOCIATIONS. 281

THE UNION. — (From the CHRISTIAN EXAMINER for May, 1829.) . . 333

REMARKS ON EDUCATION. — (From the CHRISTIAN EXAMINER for November, 1833.) 369

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The following tracts, having passed through various editions at home and abroad, are now collected to meet the wishes of those, who may incline to possess them in a durable form. In common with all writings, which have obtained a good degree of notice, they have been criticized freely ; but as they have been published not to dictate opinions, but to excite thought and inquiry, they have not failed of their end, even when they have provoked doubt or reply. They have, I think, the merit of being earnest expressions of the writer's mind, and of giving the results of quiet, long-continued thought.

Some topics will be found to recur often, perhaps the reader may think too often; but it is in this way, that a writer manifests his individuality, and he can in no other do justice to his own mind. Men are distinguished from one another, not merely by difference of thoughts, but often more by the different degrees of relief or prominence, which they give to the same thoughts. In nature, what an immense dissimilarity do we observe in organized bodies, which consist of the same parts or elements, but in which these are found in great diversity of proportions! So, to learn what a man is, it is not enough to dissect his mind, and see separately the thoughts and feelings which successively possess him. The question is, what thoughts

Hosted by Google

and feelings predominate, stand out most distinctly, and give a hue and impulse to the common actions of his mind? What are his great ideas? These form the man, and by their truth and dignity he is very much to be judged.

The following writings will be found to be distinguished by nothing more, than by the high estimate which they express of human nature. A respect for the human soul breathes through them. The time may come for unfolding my views more fully on this and many connected topics. As yet, I have given but fragments; and, on this account, I have been sometimes misapprehended. The truth is, that a man, who looks through the present disguises and humbling circumstances of human nature, and speaks with earnestness of what it was made for and what it may become, is commonly set down by men of the world as a romancer, and what is far worse, by the religious, as a minister to human pride, perhaps as exalting man against God. A few remarks on this point seem, therefore, a proper introduction to these volumes.

It is not, however, my purpose in this place to enter far into the consideration of the greatness of human nature, and of its signs and expressions in the inward and outward experience of men. It will be sufficient here to observe, that the greatness of the soul is especially seen in the intellectual energy which discerns absolute, universal truth, in the idea of God, in freedom of will and moral power, in disinterestedness and self-sacrifice, in the boundlessness of love, in aspirations after perfection, in desires and affections, which time and space cannot confine, and the world cannot fill. The soul, viewed in these lights, should fill us with awe. It is an immortal germ, which may be said to contain now within itself what endless ages are to unfold. It is truly an image of the infinity of God, and no words can do justice to its grandeur.

Hosted by Google

There is, however, another and very different aspect of our nature. When we look merely at what it now is, at its present developement, at what falls under present consciousness, we see in it much of weakness and limitation, and still more, we see it narrowed and degraded by error and sin. This is the aspect, under which it appears to most men; and so strong is the common feeling of human infirmity, that a writer, holding higher views, must state them with caution, if he would be listened to without prejudice. My language, I trust, will be sufficiently measured, as my object at present is not to set forth the greatness of human nature, but to remove difficulties in relation to it, in the minds of religious people.

From the direction, which theology has taken, it has been thought, that to ascribe any thing to man, was to detract so much from God. The disposition has been, to establish striking contrasts between man and God, and not to see and rejoice in the likeness between them. It has been thought, that to darken the creation, was the way to bring out more clearly the splendor of the Creator. The human being has been subjected to a stern criticism. It has been forgotten, that he is as yet an infant, new to existence, unconscious of his powers; and he has been expected to see clearly, walk firmly, and act perfectly. Especially in estimating his transgressions, the chief regard has been had, not to his finite nature and present stage of developement, but to the infinity of the being against whom he has sinned; so that God's greatness, instead of being made a ground of hope, has been used to plunge man into despair.

I have here touched on a great spring of error in religion, and of error among the most devout. I refer to the tendency of fervent minds, to fix their thoughts exclusively or unduly on God's infinity. It is said, in devotional writings, that exalted and absorbing views of

Hosted by Google

God enter into the very essence of piety; that our grand labor should be, to turn the mind from the creature to the creator; that the creature cannot sink too low in our estimation, or God fill too high a sphere. God, we are told, must not be limited; nor are his rights to be restrained by any rights in his creatures. These are made to minister to their Maker's glory, not to glorify themselves. They wholly depend on him, and have no power which they can call their own. His sovereignty, awful and omnipotent, is not to be kept in check, or turned from its purposes, by any claims of his subjects. Man's place is the dust. The entire prostration of his faculties is the true homage, he is to offer God. He is not to exalt his reason or his sense of right against the decrees of the Almighty. He has but one lesson to learn, that he is nothing, that God is All in All. Such is the common language of theology.

These views are exceedingly natural. That the steady, earnest contemplation of the Infinite One, should so dazzle the mind as to obscure or annihilate all things else, ought not to surprise us. By looking at the sun, we lose the power of seeing other objects. It was, I conceive, one design of God in hiding himself so far from us, in throwing around himself the veil of his works, to prevent this very evil. He intended that our faculties should be left at liberty to act on other things besides himself, that the will should not be crushed by his overpowering greatness, that we should be free agents, that we should recognise rights in ourselves and in others as well as in the Creator, and thus be introduced into a wide and ever enlarging sphere of action and duty. Still the idea of the Infinite is of vast power, and the mind, in surrendering itself to it, is in danger of becoming unjust to itself and other beings, of losing that sentiment of self-respect, which should be inseparable from a moral nature, of de

Hosted by Google

grading the intellect by the forced belief of contradictions which God is supposed to sanction, and of losing that distinct consciousness of moral freedom, of power over itself, without which the interest of life and the sense of duty are gone.

Let it not be imagined from these remarks, that I would turn the mind from God's Infinity. This is the grand truth; but it must not stand alone in the mind. The finite is something real as well as the infinite. We must reconcile the two in our theology. It is as dangerous to exclude the former as the latter. God surpasses all human thought; yet human thought, mysterious, unbounded, "wandering through eternity," is not to be contemned. God's sovereignty is limitless; still man has rights. God's power is irresistible; still man is free. On God, we entirely depend; yet we can and do act from ourselves, and determine our own characters. These antagonist ideas, if so they may be called, are equally true, and neither can be spared. It will not do for an impassioned or an abject piety, to wink one class of them out of sight. In a healthy mind they live together; and the worst error in religion has arisen from throwing a part of them into obscurity.

In most religious systems, the tendency has been to seize exclusively on the idea of the Infinite, and to sacrifice to this the finite, the created, the human. This I have said is very natural. To the eye of sense, man is such a mote in the creation, his imperfections and sins are so prominent in his history, the changes of his life are so sudden, so awful, he vanishes into such darkness, the mystery of the tomb is so fearful, all his outward possessions are so fleeting, the earth which he treads on so insecure, and all surrounding nature subject to such fearful revolutions, that the reflective and sensitive mind is prone to see Nothingness inscribed on the human be-

Hosted by Google

ing and on all things that are made, and to rise to God as the only reality. Another more influential feeling contributes to the same end. The mind of man, in its present infancy and blindness, is apt to grow servile through fear, and seeks to propitiate the Divine Being by flattery and self-depreciation. Thus deep are the springs of religious error. To admit all the elements of truth into our system, at once to adore the infinity of God and to give due importance to our own free moral nature, is no very easy work. But it must be done. Man's free activity is as important to religion as God's infinity. In the kingdom of Heaven, the moral power of the subject is as essential as the omnipotence of the sovereign. The rights of both have the same sacredness. To rob man of his dignity is as truly to subvert religion, as to strip God of his perfection. We must believe in man's agency as truly as in the Divine, in his freedom as truly as in his dependence, in his individual being as truly as in the great doctrine of his living in God. Just as far as the desire of exalting the Divinity obscures these conceptions, our religion is sublimated into mysticism or degraded into servility.

In the Oriental world, the human mind has tended strongly to fix on the idea of the Infinite, the Vast, the Incomprehensible. In its speculations it has started from God. Swallowed up in his greatness, it has annihilated the creature. Perfection has been thought to lie in self-oblivion, in losing one's self in the Divinity, in establishing exclusive communion with God. The mystic worshipper fled from society to wildernesses, where not even nature's beauty might divert the soul from the Unseen. Living on roots, sleeping on the rocky floor of his cave, he hoped to absorb himself in the One and the Infinite. The more the consciousness of the individual was lost, and the more the will and the intellect

Hosted by Google

became passive or yielded to the universal soul, the more perfect seemed the piety.

From such views naturally sprung Pantheism. No being was at last recognised but God. He was pronounced the only reality. The universe seemed a succession of shows, shadows, evanescent manifestations of the One, Ineffable Essence. The human spirit was but an emanation, soon to be reabsorbed in its source. God, it was said, bloomed in the flower, breathed in the wind, flowed in the stream, and thought in the human soul. All our powers were but movements of one infinite force. Under the deceptive spectacle of multiplied individuals intent on various ends, there was but one agent. Life, with its endless changes, was but the heaving of one and the same eternal ocean.

This mode of thought naturally gave birth or strength to that submission to despotic power, which has characterized the Eastern world. The sovereign, in whom the whole power of the state was centred, became an emblem of the One, Infinite Power, and was worshipped as its representative. An unresisting quietism naturally grew out of the contemplation of God as the all-absorbing and irresistible energy. Man, a bubble, arising out of the ocean of the universal soul, and fated soon to vanish in it again, had plainly no destiny to accomplish, which could fill him with hope or rouse him to effort. In the East the individual was counted nothing. In Greece and Rome he was counted much, and he did much. In the Greek and the Roman the consciousness of power was indeed too little chastened by religious reverence. Their gods were men. Their philosophy, though in a measure borrowed from or tinctured with the Eastern, still spoke of man as his own master, as having an independent happiness in the energy of his own will. As far as they thus severed themselves from God, they did themselves

Hosted by Google

great harm; but in their recognition, however imperfect, of the grandeur of the soul, lay the secret of their vast influence on human affairs.

In all ages of the church, the tendency of the religious mind to the exclusive thought of God, to the denial or forgetfulness of all other existence and power, has come forth in various forms. The Catholic church, notwithstanding its boasted unity, has teemed with mystics, who have sought to lose themselves in God. It would seem as if the human mind, cut off by this church from free, healthful inquiry, had sought liberty in this vague contemplation of the Infinite. In the class, just referred to, were found many noble spirits, especially Fenelon, whose quietism, with all its amiableness, we must look on as a disease.

In Protestantism, the same tendency to exalt God and annihilate the creature has manifested itself, though in less pronounced forms. We see it in Quakerism, and Calvinism, the former striving to reduce the soul to silence, to suspend its action, that in its stillness God alone may be heard; and the latter, making God the only power in the universe, and annihilating the free will, that one will alone may be done in heaven and on earth.

Calvinism will complain of being spoken of as an approach to Pantheism It will say, that it recognises distinct minds from the Divine. But what avails this, if it robs these minds of self-determining force, of original activity; if it makes them passive recipients of the Universal Force; if it sees in human action only the necessary issues of foreign impulse. The doctrine, that God is the only Substance, which is pantheism, differs little from the doctrine, that God is the only active power of the universe. For what is substance without power? It is a striking fact, that the philosophy, which teaches that matter is an inert substance, and that God is the

Hosted by Google

force which pervades it, has led men to question, whether any such thing as matter exists; whether the powers of attraction and repulsion, which are regarded as the indwelling Deity, be not its whole essence. Take away force, and substance is a shadow and might as well vanish from the universe. Without a free power in man, he is nothing. The divine agent within him is every thing. Man acts only in show. He is a phenomenal existence, under which the one Infinite power is manifested; and is this much better than Pantheism?

One of the greatest of all errors, is the attempt to exalt God, by making him the sole cause, the sole agent in the universe, by denying to the creature freedom of will and moral power, by making man a mere recipient and transmitter of a foreign impulse. This, if followed out consistently, destroys all moral connexion between God and his creatures. In aiming to strengthen the physical, it ruptures the moral bond, which holds them together. To extinguish the free will is to strike the conscience with death, for both have but one and the same life. It destroys responsibility. It puts out the light of the universe; it makes the universe a machine. It freezes the fountain of our moral feelings, of all generous affection and lofty aspirations. Pantheism, if it leave man a free agent, is a comparatively harmless speculation; as we see in the case of Milton. The denial of moral freedom, could it really be believed, would prove the most fatal of errors. If Edwards's work on the will could really answer its end, if it could thoroughly persuade men that they were bound by an irresistible necessity, that their actions were fixed links in the chain of destiny, that there was but one agent, God, in the universe; it would be one of the most pernicious books ever issued from our press. Happily it is a demonstration which no man believes, which the whole consciousness contradicts

Hosted by Google

It is a fact worthy of serious thought and full of solemn instruction, that many of the worst errors have grown out of the religious tendencies of the mind. So necessary is it to keep watch over our whole nature, to subject the highest sentiments to the calm, conscientious reason. Men starting from the idea of God, have been so dazzled by it, as to forget or misinterpret the universe. They have come to see in him the only force in creation and in other beings only signs, shadows, echoes of this. Absolute dependence is the only relation to God, which they have left to human beings. Our infinitely nobler relations, those which spring from the power of free obedience to a moral law, their theory dissolves. The moral nature, of which freedom is the foundation and essence, which confers rights and imposes duties, which is the ground of praise and blame, which lies at the foundation of self-respect, of friendship between man and man, of spiritual connexion between man and his maker, which is the spring of holy enthusiasm and heavenly aspiration, which gives to life its interest, to creation its glory, this is annihilated by the mistaken piety, which, to exalt God, to make him All in All, immolates to him the powers of the universe.

This tendency, as we have seen, gave birth in former ages to asceticism, drove some of the noblest men into cloisters or caverns, infected them with the fatal notion, that there was an hostility between their relations to God and their relations to his creatures, and of course persuaded them to make a sacrifice of the latter. To this we owe systems of theology degrading human nature, denying its power and grandeur, breaking it into subjection to the priest through whom alone God is supposed to approach the abject multitude, and placing human virtue in exaggerated humiliations. The idea of God, the grandest of all, and which ought above all to elevate the soul,

Hosted by Google

nas too often depressed it and led good minds very far astray, a consideration singularly fitted to teach us tolerant views of error, and to enjoin caution and sobriety in religious speculation.

I hope, that I shall not be thought wanting in a just tolerance, in the strictures now offered on those systems of theology and philosophy, which make God the only power in the universe and rob man of his dignity. Among the authors of these, may be found some of the greatest and best men. To this class belonged Hartley, whose work on Man carries indeed the taint of materialism and necessity, but still deserves to be reckoned among the richest contributions ever made to the science of mind, whilst it breathes the profoundest piety. Our own Edwards was as eminent for religious as for intellectual power. The consistency of great error with great virtue is one of the lessons of universal history. But error is not made harmless by such associations. The false theories of which I have spoken, though not thoroughly believed, have wrought much evil. They have done much, I think, to perpetuate those abject views of human nature, which keep it where it is, which check men's aspirations, and reconcile them to their present poor modes of thought and action as the fixed unalterable laws of their being.

Many religious people fall into the error, which I have wished to expose, through the belief that they thus glorify the creator. "The glory of God," they say, "is our chief end;" and this is accomplished as they suppose by taking all power from man and transferring all to his Maker. We have here an example of the injury done by imperfect apprehension and a vague, misty use of Scripture language. The "glory of God," is undoubtedly to be our end; but what does this consist in? It means the shining forth of his perfection in his creation, especially in his spiritual offspring; and it is best pro-

Hosted by Google

moted by awakening in these their highest faculties, by bringing out in ourselves and others the image of God in which all are made. An enlightened, disinterested human being, morally strong, and exerting a wide influence by the power of virtue, is the clearest reflexion of the divine splendor on earth, and we glorify God in proportion as we form ourselves and others after this model. The glory of the Maker lies in his work. We do not honor him by breaking down the human soul, by connecting it with him only by a tie of slavish dependence. By making him the author of a mechanical universe, we ascribe to him a low kind of agency. It is his glory that he creates beings like himself, free beings, not slaves; that he forms them to obedience, not by physical agency, but by moral influences; that he confers on them the reality, not the show of power; and opens to their faith and devout strivings a futurity of progress and glory without end. It is not by darkening and dishonoring the creature, that we honor the creator. Those men glorify God most, who look with keen eye and loving heart on his works, who catch in all some glimpses of beauty and power, who have a spiritual sense for good in its dimmest manifestations, and who can so interpret the world, that it becomes a bright witness to the divinity.

To such remarks as these it is commonly objected, that we thus obscure, if we do not deny, the doctrine of Entire Dependence on God, a doctrine which is believed to be eminently the foundation of religion. But not so. On the contrary, the greater the creature, the more extensive is his dependence; the more he has to give thanks for, the more he owes to the free gift of his Creator. No matter what grandeur or freedom we ascribe to our powers, if we maintain, as we ought, that they are bestowed, inspired, sustained by God; that he is their life; that to him we owe all the occasions and spheres of their action and all

Hosted by Google

the helps and incitements by which they are perfected. On account of their grandeur and freedom they are not less his gifts ; and in as far as they are divine, their natural tendency is not towards idolatrous self-reliance, but towards the grateful, joyful recognition of their adorable source. The doctrine of dependence is in no degree impaired by the highest views of the human soul.

Let me farther observe, that the doctrine of entire dependence is not, as is often taught, the fundamental doctrine of religion, so that to secure this, all other ideas must be renounced. And this needs to be taught, because nothing has been more common with theologians than to magnify our dependence, at the expense of every thing elevated in our nature. Man has been stripped of freedom, and spoken of as utterly impotent, lest he should trench on God's sole, supreme power. To eradicate this error, it should be understood, that our dependence is not our chief relation to God, and that it is not the ground of religion, if by religion we understand the sentiment of faith, reverence, and love towards the Divinity. That piety may exist, it is not enough to know that God alone and constantly sustains all beings. This is not a foundation for moral feelings towards him. The great question on which religion rests, is, *What kind* of a universe does he create and sustain ? Were a being of vast power to give birth to a system of unmeasured, unmitigated evil, dependence on him would be any thing but a ground of reverence. We should hate it, and long to flee from it into nonexistence. The great question, I repeat it, is, what is the nature, the end, the purpose of the creation which God upholds. On this and on the relations growing out of this, religion wholly rests. True, we depend on the Creator ; and so does the animal ; so does the clod ; and were this the only relation, we should be no more bound to worship than they. We sustain a grander rela-

Hosted by Google

tion, that of rational, moral, free beings to a Spiritual Father. We are not mere material substances, subjected to an irresistible physical law, or mere animals subjected to resistless instincts; but are souls, on which a moral law is written, in which a divine oracle is heard. Take away the moral relation of the created spirit to the universal spirit, and that of entire dependence would remain as it is now; but no ground, and no capacity of religion would remain; and the splendor of the universe would fade away.

We must start in religion from our own souls. In these is the fountain of all divine truth. An outward revelation is only possible and intelligible, on the ground of conceptions and principles, previously furnished by the soul. Here is our primitive teacher and light. Let us not disparage it. There are, indeed, philosophical schools of the present day, which tell us, that we are to start in all our speculations from the Absolute, the Infinite. But we rise to these conceptions from the contemplation of our own nature; and even if it were not so, of what avail would be the notion of an Absolute, Infinite existence, an Uncaused Unity, if stripped of all those intellectual and moral attributes, which we learn only from our own souls. What but a vague shadow, a sounding name, is the metaphysical Deity, the substance without modes, the being without properties, the naked unity, which performs such a part in some of our philosophical systems. The only God, whom our thoughts can rest on, and our hearts can cling to, and our consciences can recognise, is the God whose image dwells in our own souls. The grand ideas of Power, Reason, Wisdom, Love, Rectitude, Holiness, Blessedness, that is, of all God's attributes, come from within, from the action of our own spiritual nature. Many indeed think that they learn God from marks of design and skill in the outward world; but our ideas of design

Hosted by Google

and skill, of a determining cause, of an end or purpose, are derived from consciousness, from our own souls. Thus the soul is the spring of our knowledge of God.

These remarks might easily be extended, but these will suffice to show, that in insisting on the claims of our nature to reverence, I have not given myself to a subject of barren speculation. It has intimate connexions with religion ; and deep injury to religion has been the consequence of its neglect. I have also felt and continually insisted, that a new reverence for man was essential to the cause of social reform. As long as men regard one another as they now do, that is as little better than the brutes, they will continue to treat one another brutally. Each will strive, by craft or skill, to make others his tools. There can be no spirit of brotherhood, no true peace, any farther than men come to understand their affinity with and relation to God and the infinite purpose for which he gave them life. As yet these ideas are treated as a kind of spiritual romance ; and the teacher, who really expects men to see in themselves and one another the children of God, is smiled at as a visionary. The reception of this plainest truth of Christianity would revolutionize society, and create relations among men not dreamed of at the present day. A union would spring up, compared with which our present friendships would seem estrangements. Men would know the import of the word Brother, as yet nothing but a word to multitudes. None of us can conceive the change of manners, the new courtesy and sweetness, the mutual kindness, deference, and sympathy, the life and energy of efforts for social melioration, which are to spring up, in proportion as man shall penetrate beneath the body to the spirit, and shall learn what the lowest human being is. Then insults, wrongs, and oppressions, now hardly thought of, will give a deeper shock than we receive from crimes, which the

Hosted by Google

laws punish with death. Then man will be sacred in man's sight; and to injure him will be regarded as open hostility toward God. It has been under a deep feeling of the intimate connexion of better and juster views of human nature with all social and religious progress, that I have insisted on it so much in the following tracts, and I hope that the reader will not think that I have given it disproportioned importance.

I proceed to another sentiment, which is expressed so habitually in these writings, as to constitute one of their characteristics, and which is intimately connected with the preceding topic. It is reverence for Liberty, for human rights; a sentiment, which has grown with my growth, which is striking deeper root in my age, which seems to me a chief element of true love for mankind, and which alone fits a man for intercourse with his fellow-creatures. I have lost no occasion for expressing my deep attachment to liberty in all its forms, civil, political, religious, to liberty of thought, speech, and the press, and of giving utterance to my abhorrence of all the forms of oppression. This love of freedom I have not borrowed from Greece or Rome. It is not the classical enthusiasm of youth, which, by some singular good fortune, has escaped the blighting influences of intercourse with the world. Greece and Rome are names of little weight to a Christian. They are warnings rather than inspirers and guides. My reverence for human liberty and rights has grown up in a different school, under milder and holier discipline. Christianity has taught me to respect my race, and to reprobate its oppressors. It is because I have learned to regard man under the light of this religion, that I cannot bear to see him treated as a brute, insulted, wronged, enslaved, made to wear a yoke, to tremble before his brother, to serve him as a tool, to hold property and life at his

Hosted by Google

will, to surrender intellect and conscience to the priest, or to seal his lips or belie his thoughts through dread of the civil power. It is because I have learned the essential equality of men before the common Father, that I cannot endure to see one man establishing his arbitrary will over another by fraud, or force, or wealth, or rank, or superstitious claims. It is because the human being has moral powers, because he carries a law in his own breast, and was made to govern himself, that I cannot endure to see him taken out of his own hands and fashioned into a tool by another's avarice or pride. It is because I see in him a great nature, the divine image, and vast capacities, that I demand for him means of self-developement, spheres for free action; that I call society not to fetter, but to aid his growth. Without intending to disparage the outward, temporal advantages of liberty, I have habitually regarded it in a higher light, as the birthright of the soul, as the element, in which men are to put themselves forth, to become conscious of what they are, and to fulfil the end of their being.

Christianity has joined with all history in inspiring me with a peculiar dread and abhorrence of the passion for power, for dominion over men. There is nothing in the view of our divine teacher so hostile to his divine spirit, as the lust of domination. This we are accustomed to regard as eminently the sin of the Archfiend. "By this sin fell the angels." It is the most Satanic of all human passions, and it has inflicted more terrible evils on the human family than all others. It has made the names of king and priest the most appalling in history. There is no crime, which has not been perpetrated for the strange pleasure of treading men under foot, of fastening chains on the body or mind. The strongest ties of nature have been rent asunder, her holiest feelings smothered, parents, children, brothers murdered, to secure dominion

Hosted by Google

over man. The people have now been robbed of the necessaries of life, and now driven to the field of slaughter like flocks of sheep, to make one man the master of millions. Through this passion, government, ordained by God, to defend the weak against the strong, to exalt right above might, has up to this time been the great wrong doer. Its crimes throw those of private men into the shade. Its murders reduce to insignificance those of the bandits, pirates, highwaymen, assassins, against whom it undertakes to protect society. How harmless at this moment are all the criminals of Europe, compared with the Russian power in Poland. This passion for power, which in a thousand forms, with a thousand weapons, is warring against human liberty, and which Christianity condemns as its worst foe, I have never ceased to reprobate with whatever strength of utterance God has given me. Power trampling on right, whether in the person of king or priest, or in the shape of democracies, majorities and republican slaveholders, is the saddest sight to him who honors human nature and desires its enlargement and happiness.

So fearful is the principle of which I have spoken, that I have thought it right to recommend restrictions on power, and a simplicity in government, beyond what most approve. Power, I apprehend, should not be suffered to run into great masses. No more of it should be confided to rulers, than is absolutely necessary to repress crime and preserve public order. A purer age may warrant larger trusts ; but the less of government now the better, if society be kept in peace. There should exist, if possible, no office to madden ambition. There should be no public prize tempting enough to convulse a nation. One of the tremendous evils of the world, is the monstrous accumulation of power in a few hands. Half a dozen men may, at this moment, light the fires of war through

Hosted by Google

the world, may convulse all civilized nations, sweep earth and sea with armed hosts, spread desolation through the fields and bankruptcy through cities, and make themselves felt by some form of suffering through every household in Christendom. Has not one politician recently caused a large part of Europe to bristle with bayonets? And ought this tremendous power to be lodged in the hands of any human being? Is any man pure enough to be trusted with it? Ought such a prize as this to be held out to ambition? Can we wonder at the shameless profligacy, intrigue, and the base sacrifices of public interests, by which it is sought, and when gained, held fast Undoubtedly great social changes are required to heal this evil, to diminish this accumulation of power. National spirit, which is virtual hostility to all countries but our own, must yield to a growing humanity, to a new knowledge of the spirit of Christ. Another important step is, a better comprehension by communities, that government is at best a rude machinery, which can accomplish but very limited good, and which, when strained to accomplish what individuals should do for themselves, is sure to be perverted by selfishness to narrow purposes, or to defeat through ignorance its own ends. Man is too ignorant to govern much, to form vast plans for states and empires. Human policy has almost always been in conflict with the great laws of social well being; and the less we rely on it the better. The less of power, given to man over man, the better. I speak, of course, of physical, political force. There is a power which cannot be accumulated to excess, I mean moral power, that of truth and virtue, the royalty of wisdom and love, of magnanimity and true religion. This is the guardian of all right. It makes those whom it acts on, free. It is mightiest when most gentle. In the progress of society this

Hosted by Google

is more and more to supersede the coarse workings of government. Force is to fall before it.

It must not be inferred from these remarks, that I am an enemy to all restraint. Restraint in some form or other, is an essential law of our nature, a necessary discipline, running through life, and not to be escaped by any art or violence. Where can we go, and not meet it? The powers of nature are, all of them, limits to human power. A never-ceasing force of gravity chains us to the earth. Mountains, rocks, precipices, and seas forbid our advances. If we come to society, restraints multiply on us. Our neighbour's rights limit our own. His property is forbidden ground. Usage restricts our free action, fixes our manners, and the language we must speak, and the modes of pursuing our ends. Business is a restraint, setting us wearisome tasks, and driving us through the same mechanical routine day after day. Duty is a restraint, imposing curbs on passion, enjoining one course and forbidding another, with stern voice, with uncompromising authority. Study is a restraint, compelling us, if we would learn any thing, to concentrate the forces of thought, and to bridle the caprices of fancy. All law, divine or human, is, as the name imports, restraint. No one feels more than I do, the need of this element of human life. He, who would fly from it, must live in perpetual conflict with nature, society, and himself.

But all this does not prove, that liberty, free action, is not an infinite good, and that we should seek and guard it with sleepless jealousy. For if we look at the various restraints of which I have spoken, we shall see that liberty is the end and purpose of all. Nature's powers around us hem us in, only to rouse a free power within us. It acts that we should react. Burdens press on us, that the soul's elastic force should come forth. Bounds are set, that we should clear them. The weight, which

Hosted by Google

gravitation fastens to our limbs, incites us to borrow speed from winds and steam, and we fly where we seemed doomed to creep. The sea, which first stopped us, becomes the path to a new hemisphere. The sharp necessities of life, cold, hunger, pain, which chain man to toil, wake up his faculties, and fit him for wider action. Duty restrains the passions, only that the nobler faculties and affections may have freer play, may ascend to God, and embrace all his works. Parents impose restraint, that the child may learn to go alone, may outgrow authority. Government is ordained, that the rights and freedom of each and all may be inviolate. In study thought is confined, that it may penetrate the depths of truth, may seize on the great laws of nature, and take a bolder range. Thus freedom, ever-expanding action, is the end of all just restraint. Restraint, without this end, is a slavish yoke. How often has it broken the young spirit, tamed the heart and the intellect, and made social life a standing pool. We were made for free action. This alone is life, and enters into all that is good and great Virtue is free choice of the right; love, the free embrace of the heart; grace, the free motion of the limbs; genius, the free, bold flight of thought; eloquence, its free and fervent utterance. Let me add, that social order is better preserved by liberty, than by restraint. The latter, unless most wisely and justly employed, frets, exasperates, and provokes secret resistance; and still more, it is rendered needful very much by that unhappy constitution of society, which denies to multitudes the opportunities of free activity. A community, which should open a great variety of spheres to its members, so that all might find free scope for their powers, would need little array of force for restraint. Liberty would prove the best peace-officer. The social order of New England, without a soldier and almost without a police, bears loud witness to this truth. These

Hosted by Google

views may suffice to explain the frequent recurrence of this topic in the following tracts.

I will advert to one topic more, and do it briefly, that I may not extend these remarks beyond reasonable bounds. I have written once and again on War, a hackneyed subject, as it is called, yet, one would think, too terrible ever to become a commonplace. Is this insanity never to cease? At this moment, whilst I write, two of the freest and most enlightened nations, having one origin, bound together above all others by mutual dependence, by the interweaving of interests, are thought by some to be on the brink of war. False notions of national honor, as false and unholy as those of the duellist, do most toward fanning this fire. Great nations, like great boys, place their honor in resisting insult and in fighting well. One would think, the time had gone by, in which nations needed to rush to arms, to prove that they were not cowards. If there is one truth, which history has taught, it is, that communities in all stages of society, from the most barbarous to the most civilized, have sufficient courage. No people can charge upon its conscience, that it has not shed blood enough in proof of its valor. Almost any man, under the usual stimulants of the camp, can stand fire. The poor wretch, enlisted from a dram-shop and turned into the ranks, soon fights like a "hero." Must France, and England, and America, after so many hard-fought fields, go to war to disprove the charge of wanting spirit? Is it not time, that the point of honor should undergo some change, that some glimpses at least of the true glory of a nation should be caught by rulers and people? "It is the honor of a man to pass over a transgression," and so it is of states. To be wronged is no disgrace. To bear wrong generously, till every means of conciliation is exhausted; to recoil with manly dread

Hosted by Google

from the slaughter of our fellow-creatures; to put confidence in the justice, which other nations will do to our motives; to have that consciousness of courage, which will make us scorn the reproach of cowardice; to feel that there is something grander than the virtue of savages; to desire peace for the world as well as ourselves, and to shrink from kindling a flame, which may involve the world; these are the principles and feelings, which do honor to a people. Has not the time come, when a nation professing these, may cast itself on the candor of mankind? Must fresh blood flow for ever, to keep clean the escutcheon of a nation's glory? For one, I look on war with a horror, which no words can express. I have long wanted patience to read of battles. Were the world of my mind, no man would fight for glory; for the name of a commander, who has no other claim to respect, seldom passes my lips, and the want of sympathy drives him from my mind. The thought of man, God's immortal child, butchered by his brother; the thought of sea and land stained with human blood by human hands, of women and children buried under the ruins of besieged cities, of the resources of empires and the mighty powers of nature all turned by man's malignity into engines of torture and destruction; this thought gives to earth the semblance of hell. I shudder as among demons. I cannot now, as I once did, talk lightly, thoughtlessly of fighting with this or that nation. That nation is no longer an abstraction to me. It is no longer a vague mass. It spreads out before me into individuals, in a thousand interesting forms and relations. It consists of husbands and wives, parents and children, who love one another as I love my own home. It consists of affectionate women and sweet children. It consists of Christians, united with me to the common Saviour, and in whose spirit I reverence the likeness of his divine virtue. It con-

Hosted by Google

sists of a vast multitude of laborers at the plough and in the workshop, whose toils I sympathize with, whose burden I should rejoice to lighten, and for whose elevation I have pleaded. It consists of men of science, taste, genius, whose writings have beguiled my solitary hours, and given life to my intellect and best affections. Here is the nation which I am called to fight with, into whose families I must send mourning, whose fall or humiliation I must seek through blood. I cannot do it, without a clear commission from God. I love this nation. Its men and women are my brothers and sisters. I could not, without unutterable pain, thrust a sword into their hearts. If, indeed, my country were invaded by hostile armies, threatening without disguise its rights, liberties, and dearest interests, I should strive to repel them, just as I should repel a criminal, who should enter my house to slay what I hold most dear, and what is intrusted to my care. But I cannot confound with such a case the common instances of war. In general, war is the work of ambitious men, whose principles have gained no strength from the experience of public life, whose policy is colored if not swayed by personal views or party interests, who do not seek peace with a single heart, who, to secure doubtful rights, perplex the foreign relations of the state, spread jealousies at home and abroad, enlist popular passions on the side of strife, commit themselves too far for retreat, and are then forced to leave to the arbitration of the sword, what an impartial umpire could easily have arranged. The question of peace and war, is too often settled for a country by men, in whom a Christian, a lover of his race, can put little or no trust; and at the bidding of such men, is he to steep his hands in human blood? But this insanity is passing away. This savageness cannot endure, however hardened to it men are by long use.

Hosted by Google

The hope of waking up some from their lethargy has induced me to recur to this topic so often in my writings.

I might name other topics, which occupy a large space in the following tracts, but enough has been said here. I will only add, that I submit these volumes to the public with a deep feeling of their imperfections. Indeed, on such subjects as God, and Christ, and Duty, and Immortality, and Perfection, how faint must all human utterance be! In another life, we shall look back on our present words as we do on the lispings of our childhood. Still these lispings conduct the child to higher speech. Still, amidst our weakness, we may learn something, and make progress, and quicken one another by free communication. We indeed know and teach comparatively little; but the known is not the less true or precious, because there is an infinite unknown. Nor ought our ignorance to discourage us, as if we were left to hopeless skepticism. There are great truths, which every honest heart may be assured of. There *is* such a thing, as a serene, immovable conviction. Faith is a deep want of the soul. We have faculties for the spiritual, as truly as for the outward world. God, the foundation of all existence, may become to the mind the most real of all beings. We can and do see in virtue an everlasting beauty. The distinctions of right and wrong, the obligations of goodness and justice, the divinity of conscience, the moral connexion of the present and future life, the greatness of the character of Christ, the ultimate triumphs of truth and love, are to multitudes, not probable deductions, but intuitions accompanied with the consciousness of certainty. They shine with the clear, constant brightness of the lights of heaven. The believer feels himself resting on an everlasting foundation. It is to this power of moral or spiritual perception, that the following writings are chiefly ad-

Hosted by Google

dressed. I have had testimony, that they have not been wholly ineffectual, in leading some minds to a more living and unfaltering persuasion of great moral truths. Without this, I should be little desirous to send them out in this new form. I trust that they will meet some wants. Books which are to pass away, may yet render much service, by their fitness to the intellectual struggles and moral aspirations of the times in which they are written. If in this or in any way I can serve the cause of truth, humanity, and religion, I shall regard my labors, as having earned the best recompence which God bestows on his creatures.

W. E. C.

BOSTON, *April* 18*th*, 1841.

P. S. I intended to say, that some of the following tracts savour of the periods, in which they were written, and give opinions which time has disproved. In the article on Napoleon Bonaparte fears are expressed, which have in a good measure passed away. In the same Review, the conqueror of Waterloo is spoken of as having only the merit of a great soldier. No one then believed, that his opponents were soon to acknowledge his eminence in civil as in military affairs. The article is left as it was, from the difficulty of remodelling it, and because it may be useful as a record of past impressions.

Hosted by Google

REVIEWS.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

REMARKS

ON THE CHARACTER AND WRITINGS

OF

JOHN MILTON.

A TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON. Translated from the Original, by Charles R. Sumner, M. A., Librarian and Historiographer to His Majesty, and Prebendary of Canterbury. From the London Edition. Boston, 1825. 2 vols. 8vo.

THE discovery of a work of Milton, unknown to his own times, is an important event in literary history. The consideration, that we of this age are the first readers of this Treatise, naturally heightens our interest in it; for we seem in this way to be brought nearer to the author, and to sustain the same relation which his contemporaries bore to his writings. The work opens with a salutation, which, from any other man, might be chargeable with inflation; but which we feel to be the natural and appropriate expression of the spirit of Milton. Endowed with gifts of the soul, which have been imparted to few of our race, and conscious of having consecrated them through life to God and mankind, he rose without effort or affectation to the

Hosted by Google

style of an Apostle: — "JOHN MILTON, TO ALL THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST, AND TO ALL WHO PROFESS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, PEACE, AND THE RECOGNITION OF THE TRUTH, AND ETERNAL SALVATION IN GOD THE FATHER, AND IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." Our ears are the first to hear this benediction, and it seems not so much to be borne to us from a distant age, as to come immediately from the sainted spirit, by which it was indited.

Without meaning to disparage the "Treatise on Christian Doctrine," we may say, that it owes very much of the attention, which it has excited, to the fame of its author. We value it chiefly as showing us the mind of Milton on that subject, which, above all others, presses upon men of thought and sensibility. We want to know in what conclusions such a man rested after a life of extensive and profound research, of magnanimous efforts for freedom and his country, and of communion with the most gifted minds of his own and former times. The book derives its chief interest from its author, and accordingly there seems to be a propriety in introducing our remarks upon it with some notice of the character of Milton. We are not sure that we could have abstained from this subject, even if we had not been able to offer so good an apology for attempting it. The intellectual and moral qualities of a great man are attractions not easily withstood; and we can hardly serve others or ourselves more, than by recalling to him the attention, which is scattered among inferior topics.

In speaking of the *intellectual* qualities of Milton, we may begin with observing, that the very splendor of

Hosted by Google

his poetic fame has tended to obscure or conceal the extent of his mind, and the variety of its energies and attainments. To many he seems only a poet, when in truth he was a profound scholar, a man of vast compass of thought, imbued thoroughly with all ancient and modern learning, and able to master, to mould, to impregnate with his own intellectual power, his great and various acquisitions. He had not learned the superficial doctrine of a later day, that poetry flourishes most in an uncultivated soil, and that imagination shapes its brightest visions from the mists of a superstitious age; and he had no dread of accumulating knowledge, lest it should oppress and smother his genius. He was conscious of that within him, which could quicken all knowledge, and wield it with ease and might; which could give freshness to old truths and harmony to discordant thoughts; which could bind together, by living ties and mysterious affinities, the most remote discoveries, and rear fabrics of glory and beauty from the rude materials, which other minds had collected. Milton had that universality which marks the highest order of intellect. Though accustomed almost from infancy to drink at the fountains of classical literature, he had nothing of the pedantry and fastidiousness, which disdain all other draughts. His healthy mind delighted in genius, on whatever soil, or in whatever age, it burst forth and poured out its fulness. He understood too well the rights, and dignity, and pride of creative imagination, to lay on it the laws of the Greek or Roman school. Parnassus was not to him the only holy ground of genius. He felt, that poetry was as a universal presence. Great minds were everywhere his kindred. He felt the enchantment of Oriental fiction, surrendered

Hosted by Google

himself to the strange creations of "Araby the Blest," and delighted still more in the romantic spirit of chivalry, and in the tales of wonder in which it was embodied. Accordingly his poetry reminds us of the ocean, which adds to its own boundlessness contributions from all regions under heaven. Nor was it only in the department of imagination, that his acquisitions were vast. He travelled over the whole field of knowledge, as far as it had then been explored. His various philological attainments were used to put him in possession of the wisdom stored in all countries, where the intellect had been cultivated. The natural philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, history, theology, and political science, of his own and former times, were familiar to him. Never was there a more unconfined mind; and we would cite Milton as a practical example of the benefits of that universal culture of intellect, which forms one distinction of our times, but which some dread as unfriendly to original thought. Let such remember, that mind is in its own nature diffusive. Its object is the universe, which is strictly one, or bound together by infinite connexions and correspondences; and accordingly its natural progress is from one to another field of thought; and wherever original power, creative genius exists, the mind, far from being distracted or oppressed by the variety of its acquisitions, will see more and more common bearings and hidden and beautiful analogies in all the objects of knowledge, will see mutual light shed from truth to truth, and will compel, as with a kingly power, whatever it understands, to yield some tribute of proof, or illustration, or splendor, to whatever topic it would unfold.

Milton's fame rests chiefly on his poetry, and to this

Hosted by Google

we naturally give our first attention. By those who are accustomed to speak of poetry as light reading, Milton's eminence in this sphere may be considered only as giving him a high rank among the contributors to public amusement. Not so thought Milton. Of all God's gifts of intellect, he esteemed poetical genius the most transcendent. He esteemed it in himself as a kind of inspiration, and wrote his great works with something of the conscious dignity of a prophet. We agree with Milton in his estimate of poetry. It seems to us the divinest of all arts; for it is the breathing or expression of that principle or sentiment, which is deepest and sublimest in human nature; we mean, of that thirst or aspiration, to which no mind is wholly a stranger, for something purer and lovelier, something more powerful, lofty, and thrilling, than ordinary and real life affords. No doctrine is more common among Christians than that of man's immortality; but it is not so generally understood, that the germs or principles of his whole future being are *now* wrapped up in his soul, as the rudiments of the future plant in the seed. As a necessary result of this constitution, the soul, possessed and moved by these mighty though infant energies, is perpetually stretching beyond what is present and visible, struggling against the bounds of its earthly prison-house, and seeking relief and joy in imaginings of unseen and ideal being. This view of our nature, which has never been fully developed, and which goes farther towards explaining the contradictions of human life than all others, carries us to the very foundation and sources of poetry. He who cannot interpret by his own consciousness what we now have said, wants the true key to works of genius. He has not penetrated

Hosted by Google

those secret recesses of the soul, where poetry is born and nourished, and inhales immortal vigor, and wings herself for her heavenward flight. In an intellectual nature, framed for progress and for higher modes of being, there must be creative energies, powers of original and ever-growing thought; and poetry is the form in which these energies are chiefly manifested. It is the glorious prerogative of this art, that it "makes all things new" for the gratification of a divine instinct. It indeed finds its elements in what it actually sees and experiences, in the worlds of matter and mind; but it combines and blends these into new forms and according to new affinities; breaks down, if we may so say, the distinctions and bounds of nature; imparts to material objects life, and sentiment, and emotion, and invests the mind with the powers and splendors of the outward creation; describes the surrounding universe in the colors which the passions throw over it, and depicts the soul in those modes of repose or agitation, of tenderness or sublime emotion, which manifest its thirst for a more powerful and joyful existence. To a man of a literal and prosaic character, the mind may seem lawless in these workings; but it observes higher laws than it transgresses, the laws of the immortal intellect; it is trying and developing its best faculties; and in the objects which it describes, or in the emotions which it awakens, anticipates those states of progressive power, splendor, beauty, and happiness, for which it was created.

We accordingly believe that poetry, far from injuring society, is one of the great instruments of its refinement and exaltation. It lifts the mind above ordinary life, gives it a respite from depressing cares, and awakens

Hosted by Google

the consciousness of its affinity with what is pure and noble. In its legitimate and highest efforts, it has the same tendency and aim with Christianity; that is, to spiritualize our nature. True, poetry has been made the instrument of vice, the pander of bad passions; but, when genius thus stoops, it dims its fires, and parts with much of its power; and, even when poetry is enslaved to licentiousness or misanthropy, she cannot wholly forget her true vocation. Strains of pure feeling, touches of tenderness, images of innocent happiness, sympathies with suffering virtue, bursts of scorn or indignation at the hollowness of the world, passages true to our moral nature, often escape in an immoral work, and show us how hard it is for a gifted spirit to divorce itself wholly from what is good. Poetry has a natural alliance with our best affections. It delights in the beauty and sublimity of the outward creation and of the soul. It indeed portrays, with terrible energy, the excesses of the passions; but they are passions which show a mighty nature, which are full of power, which command awe, and excite a deep though shuddering sympathy. Its great tendency and purpose is, to carry the mind beyond and above the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life; to lift it into a purer element; and to breathe into it more profound and generous emotion. It reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings back the freshness of early feeling, revives the relish of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, refines youthful love, strengthens our interest in human nature by vivid delineations of its tenderest and loftiest feelings, spreads our sympathies over all classes of society, knits us by new ties with universal being, and, through

Hosted by Google

the brightness of its prophetic visions, helps faith to lay hold on the future life.

We are aware, that it is objected to poetry, that it gives wrong views and excites false expectations of life, peoples the mind with shadows and illusions, and builds up imagination on the ruins of wisdom. That there is a wisdom, against which poetry wars, the wisdom of the senses, which makes physical comfort and gratification the supreme good, and wealth the chief interest of life, we do not deny ; nor do we deem it the least service which poetry renders to mankind, that it redeems them from the thraldom of this earthborn prudence. But, passing over this topic, we would observe, that the complaint against poetry, as abounding in illusion and deception, is in the main groundless. In many poems there is more of truth than in many histories and philosophic theories. The fictions of genius are often the vehicles of the sublimest verities, and its flashes often open new regions of thought, and throw new light on the mysteries of our being. In poetry, when the letter is falsehood, the spirit is often profoundest wisdom. And, if truth thus dwells in the boldest fictions of the poet, much more may it be expected in his delineations of life ; for the present life, which is the first stage of the immortal mind, abounds in the materials of poetry, and it is the high office of the bard to detect this divine element among the grosser labors and pleasures of our earthly being. The present life is not wholly prosaic, precise, tame, and finite. To the gifted eye it abounds in the poetic. The affections which spread beyond ourselves and stretch far into futurity ; the workings of mighty passions, which seem to arm the soul with an almost superhuman energy ; the innocent and irrepres-

Hosted by Google

sible joy of infancy ; the bloom, and buoyancy, and dazzling hopes of youth ; the throbbings of the heart, when it first wakes to love, and dreams of a happiness too vast for earth ; woman, with her beauty, and grace, and gentleness, and fulness of feeling, and depth of affection, and blushes of purity, and the tones and looks which only a mother's heart can inspire ; — these are all poetical. It is not true, that the poet paints a life which does not exist. He only extracts and concentrates, as it were, life's ethereal essence, arrests and condenses its volatile fragrance, brings together its scattered beauties, and prolongs its more refined but evanescent joys. And in this he does well ; for it is good to feel that life is not wholly usurped by cares for subsistence, and physical gratifications, but admits, in measures which may be indefinitely enlarged, sentiments and delights worthy of a higher being. This power of poetry to refine our views of life and happiness, is more and more needed as society advances. It is needed to withstand the encroachments of heartless and artificial manners, which make civilization so tame and uninteresting. It is needed to counteract the tendency of physical science, which, being now sought, not, as formerly, for intellectual gratification, but for multiplying bodily comforts, requires a new developement of imagination, taste, and poetry, to preserve men from sinking into an earthly, material, Epicurean life. — Our remarks in vindication of poetry have extended beyond our original design. They have had a higher aim than to assert the dignity of Milton as a poet, and that is, to endear and recommend this divine art to all who reverence and would cultivate and refine their nature.

Hosted by Google

In delineating Milton's character as a *poet*, we are saved the necessity of looking far for its distinguishing attributes. His name is almost identified with sublimity. He is in truth the sublimest of men. He rises, not by effort or discipline, but by a native tendency and a godlike instinct, to the contemplation of objects of grandeur and awfulness. He always moves with a conscious energy. There is no subject so vast or terrific, as to repel or intimidate him. The overpowering grandeur of a theme kindles and attracts him. He enters on the description of the infernal regions with a fearless tread, as if he felt within himself a power to erect the prison-house of fallen spirits, to encircle them with flames and horrors worthy of their crimes, to call forth from them shouts which should "tear hell's concave," and to embody in their Chief an Archangel's energies, and a Demon's pride and hate. Even the stupendous conception of Satan seems never to oppress his faculties. This character of power runs through all Milton's works. His descriptions of nature show a free and bold hand. He has no need of the minute, graphic skill, which we prize in Cowper or Crabbe. With a few strong or delicate touches, he impresses, as it were, his own mind on the scenes which he would describe, and kindles the imagination of the gifted reader to clothe them with the same radiant hues under which they appeared to his own.

This attribute of power is universally felt to characterize Milton. His sublimity is in every man's mouth. Is it felt that his poetry breathes a sensibility and tenderness hardly surpassed by its sublimity? We apprehend, that the grandeur of Milton's mind has thrown some shade over his milder beauties; and this it has

Hosted by Google

done, not only by being more striking and imposing, but by the tendency of vast mental energy to give a certain calmness to the expression of tenderness and deep feeling. A great mind is the master of its own enthusiasm, and does not often break out into those tumults, which pass with many for the signs of profound emotion. Its sensibility, though more intense and enduring, is more self-possessed, and less perturbed, than that of other men, and is therefore less observed and felt, except by those who understand, through their own consciousness, the workings and utterance of genuine feeling. We might quote pages in illustration of the qualities here ascribed to Milton. Turn to "Comus," one of his earliest productions. What sensibility breathes in the descriptions of the benighted Lady's singing, by Comus and the Spirit!

"*Comus.* — Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence:
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul
And lap it in Elysium; Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now." *Lines* 244 – 264.

Hosted by Google

"*Spirit.*—At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death." *Lines 555–563.*

In illustration of Milton's tenderness, we will open almost at a venture.

"Now Morn, her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl,
When Adam waked, so custom'd, for his sleep
Was aery-light, from pure digestion bred,
And temperate vapors bland, which th' only sound
Of leaves and fuming rills, Aurora's fan,
Lightly dispersed, and the shrill matin song
Of birds on every bough; so much the more
His wonder was to find unwaken'd Eve
With tresses discomposed, and glowing cheek,
As through unquiet rest: He, on his side
Leaning half-raised, with looks of cordial love
Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar graces; then with voice
Mild, as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whisper'd thus: Awake,
My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,
Heaven's last best gift, my ever new delight,
Awake! the morning shines, and the fresh field
Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
Our tender plants, how blows the citron grove,
What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
How nature paints her colors, how the bee
Sits on the bloom extracting liquid sweet."
Par. Lost, B. V. lines 1–25.

"So cheer'd he his fair spouse, and she was cheer'd,
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wiped them with her hair;
Two other precious drops that ready stood,

Hosted by Google

Each in their crystal sluice, he ere they fell
Kiss'd, as the gracious signs of sweet remorse,
And pious awe that fear'd to have offended."

Par. Lost, B. V. lines 129 – 135.

From this very imperfect view of the qualities of Milton's poetry, we hasten to his great work, "Paradise Lost," perhaps the noblest monument of human genius. The two first books, by universal consent, stand preëminent in sublimity. Hell and hell's king have a terrible harmony, and dilate into new grandeur and awfulness, the longer we contemplate them. From one element, "solid and liquid fire," the poet has framed a world of horror and suffering, such as imagination had never traversed. But fiercer flames than those which encompass Satan, burn in his own soul. Revenge, exasperated pride, consuming wrath, ambition, though fallen, yet unconquered by the thunders of the Omnipotent, and grasping still at the empire of the universe, — these form a picture more sublime and terrible than hell. Hell yields to the spirit which it imprisons. The intensity of its fires reveals the intenser passions and more vehement will of Satan; and the ruined archangel gathers into himself the sublimity of the scene which surrounds him. This forms the tremendous interest of these wonderful books. We see mind triumphant over the most terrible powers of nature. We see unutterable agony subdued by energy of soul. We have not indeed in Satan those bursts of passion, which rive the soul, as well as shatter the outward frame, of Lear. But we have a depth of passion which only an archangel could manifest. The all-enduring, all-defying pride of Satan, assuming so majestically hell's burning throne, and coveting the diadem which scorches his thunder-blasted

Hosted by Google

brow, is a creation requiring in its author almost the spiritual energy with which he invests the fallen seraph. Some have doubted whether the moral effect of such delineations of the storms and terrible workings of the soul is good; whether the interest felt in a spirit so transcendently evil as Satan, favors our sympathies with virtue. But our interest fastens, in this and like cases, on what is not evil. We gaze on Satan with an awe not unmixed with mysterious pleasure, as on a miraculous manifestation of the *power of mind*. What chains us, as with a resistless spell, in such a character, is spiritual might made visible by the racking pains which it overpowers. There is something kindling and ennobling in the consciousness, however awakened, of the energy which resides in mind; and many a virtuous man has borrowed new strength from the force, constancy, and dauntless courage of evil agents.

Milton's description of Satan attests in various ways the power of his genius. Critics have often observed, that the great difficulty of his work was, to reconcile the spiritual properties of his supernatural beings with the human modes of existence, which he is obliged to ascribe to them. The difficulty is too great for any genius wholly to overcome, and we must acknowledge that our enthusiasm is in some parts of the poem checked by a feeling of incongruity between the spiritual agent, and his sphere and mode of agency. But we are visited with no such chilling doubts and misgivings in the description of Satan in hell. Imagination has here achieved its highest triumph, in imparting a character of reality and truth to its most daring creations. That world of horrors, though material, is yet so remote from our ordinary nature, that a spiritual being, exiled from

Hosted by Google

heaven, finds there an appropriate home. There is, too, an indefiniteness in the description of Satan's person, which excites without shocking the imagination, and aids us to reconcile, in our conception of him, a human form with his superhuman attributes. To the production of this effect, much depends on the first impression given by the poet; for this is apt to follow us through the whole work; and here we think Milton eminently successful. The first glimpse of Satan is given us in the following lines, which, whilst too indefinite to provoke, and too sublime to allow, the scrutiny of the reason, fill the imagination of the reader with a form which can hardly be effaced.

> "Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate
> With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
> That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides
> Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
> Lay floating many a rood."
>
> *Par. Lost, B. I. lines* 192 – 196.

> "Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
> His mighty stature; on each hand the flames,
> Driven backward, slope their pointing spires, and, roll'd
> In billows, leave i' the midst a horrid vale."
>
> *Lines* 221 – 224.

We have more which we would gladly say of the delineation of Satan; especially of the glimpses which are now and then given of his deep anguish and despair, and of the touches of better feelings which are skilfully thrown into the dark picture, both suited and designed to blend, with our admiration, dread, and abhorrence, a measure of that sympathy and interest, with which every living, thinking being ought to be regarded, and without which all other feelings tend to sin and pain. But there is another topic which we cannot leave

Hosted by Google

untouched. From hell we flee to Paradise, a region as lovely as hell is terrible, and which, to those who do not know the universality of true genius, will appear doubly wonderful, when considered as the creation of the same mind, which had painted the infernal world.

Paradise and its inhabitants are in sweet accordance, and together form a scene of tranquil bliss, which calms and soothes, whilst it delights, the imagination. Adam and Eve, just moulded by the hand and quickened by the breath of God, reflect in their countenances and forms, as well as minds, the intelligence, benignity, and happiness of their Author. Their new existence has the freshness and peacefulness of the dewy morning. Their souls, unsated and untainted, find an innocent joy in the youthful creation, which spreads and smiles around them. Their mutual love is deep, for it is the love of young, unworn, unexhausted hearts, which meet in each other the only human objects on whom to pour forth their fulness of affection; and still it is serene, for it is the love of happy beings, who know not suffering even by name, whose innocence excludes not only the tumults but the thought of jealousy and shame, who, "imparadised in one another's arms," scarce dream of futurity, so blessed is their present being. We will not say that we envy our first parents; for we feel that there may be higher happiness than theirs, a happiness won through struggle with inward and outward foes, the happiness of power and moral victory, the happiness of disinterested sacrifices and wide-spread love, the happiness of boundless hope, and of "thoughts which wander through eternity." Still there are times, when the spirit, oppressed with pain, worn with toil, tired of tumult, sick at the sight of guilt, wounded in

Hosted by Google

its love, baffled in its hope, and trembling in its faith, almost longs for the "wings of a dove, that it might fly away" and take refuge amidst the "shady bowers," the "vernal airs," the "roses without thorns," the quiet, the beauty, the loveliness of Eden. It is the contrast of this deep peace of Paradise with the storms of life, which gives to the fourth and fifth books of this poem a charm so irresistible, that not a few would sooner relinquish the two first books, with all their sublimity, than part with these. It has sometimes been said, that the English language has no good pastoral poetry. We would ask, in what age or country has the pastoral reed breathed such sweet strains as are borne to us on "the odoriferous wings of gentle gales" from Milton's Paradise?

We should not fulfil our duty, were we not to say one word on what has been justly celebrated, the harmony of Milton's versification. His numbers have the prime charm of expressiveness. They vary with, and answer to, the depth, or tenderness, or sublimity of his conceptions, and hold intimate alliance with the soul. Like Michael Angelo, in whose hands the marble was said to be flexible, he bends our language, which foreigners reproach with hardness, into whatever forms the subject demands. All the treasures of sweet and solemn sound are at his command. Words, harsh and discordant in the writings of less gifted men, flow through his poetry in a full stream of harmony. This power over language is not to be ascribed to Milton's musical ear. It belongs to the soul. It is a gift or exercise of genius, which has power to impress itself on whatever it touches, and finds or frames, in sounds, motions, and material forms, correspondences and harmonies with its own fervid thoughts and feelings.

Hosted by Google

We close our remarks on Milton's poetry with observing, that it is characterized by seriousness. Great and various as are its merits, it does not discover all the variety of genius, which we find in Shakspeare, whose imagination revelled equally in regions of mirth, beauty, and terror, now evoking spectres, now sporting with fairies, and now "ascending the highest heaven of invention." Milton was cast on times too solemn and eventful, was called to take part in transactions too perilous, and had too perpetual need of the presence of high thoughts and motives, to indulge himself in light and gay creations, even had his genius been more flexible and sportive. But Milton's poetry, though habitually serious, is always healthful, and bright, and vigorous. It has no gloom. He took no pleasure in drawing dark pictures of life; for he knew by experience, that there is a power in the soul to transmute calamity into an occasion and nutriment of moral power and triumphant virtue. We find nowhere in his writings that whining sensibility and exaggeration of morbid feeling, which makes so much of modern poetry effeminating. If he is not gay, he is not spirit-broken. His "L' Allegro" proves, that he understood thoroughly the bright and joyous aspects of nature; and in his "Penseroso," where he was tempted to accumulate images of gloom, we learn, that the saddest views which he took of creation, are such as inspire only pensive musing or lofty contemplation.

From Milton's poetry, we turn to his *prose*. We rejoice that the dust is beginning to be wiped from his prose writings, and that the public are now learning, what the initiated have long known, that these

Hosted by Google

contain passages hardly inferior to his best poetry, and that they are throughout marked with the same vigorous mind which gave us "Paradise Lost." The attention to these works has been discouraged by some objections, on which we shall bestow a few remarks.

And first, it is objected to his prose writings, that the style is difficult and obscure, abounding in involutions, transpositions, and Latinisms; that his protracted sentences exhaust and weary the mind, and too often yield it no better recompense than confused and indistinct perceptions. We mean not to deny that these charges have some grounds; but they seem to us much exaggerated; and, when we consider that the difficulties of Milton's style have almost sealed up his prose writings, we cannot but lament the fastidiousness and effeminacy of modern readers. We know that simplicity and perspicuity are important qualities of style; but there are vastly nobler and more important ones, such as energy and richness, and in these Milton is not surpassed. The best style is not that which puts the reader most easily and in the shortest time in possession of a writer's naked thoughts; but that which is the truest image of a great intellect, which conveys fully and carries farthest into other souls the conceptions and feelings of a profound and lofty spirit. To be universally intelligible is not the highest merit. A great mind cannot, without injurious constraint, shrink itself to the grasp of common passive readers. Its natural movement is free, bold, and majestic, and it ought not to be required to part with these attributes, that the multitude may keep pace with it. A full mind will naturally overflow in long sentences, and, in the moment of inspiration, when thick-coming thoughts and images crowd

Hosted by Google

upon it, will often pour them forth in a splendid confusion, dazzling to common readers, but kindling to congenial spirits. There are writings which are clear through their shallowness. We must not expect in the ocean the transparency of the calm inland stream. For ourselves, we love what is called easy reading perhaps too well, especially in our hours of relaxation; but we love, too, to have our faculties tasked by master spirits. We delight in long sentences, in which a great truth, instead of being broken up into numerous periods, is spread out in its full proportions, is irradiated with variety of illustration and imagery, is set forth in a splendid affluence of language, and flows, like a full stream, with a majestic harmony which fills at once the ear and the soul. Such sentences are worthy and noble manifestations of a great and far-looking mind, which grasps at once vast fields of thought, just as the natural eye takes in at a moment wide prospects of grandeur and beauty. We would not indeed have all compositions of this character. Let abundant provision be made for the common intellect. Let such writers as Addison, an honored name, "bring down philosophy from heaven to earth." But let inspired genius fulfil its higher function of lifting the prepared mind from earth to heaven. Impose upon it no strict laws, for it is its own best law. Let it speak in its own language, in tones which suit its own ear. Let it not lay aside its natural port, or dwarf itself that it may be comprehended by the surrounding multitude. If not understood and relished now, let it place a generous confidence in other ages, and utter oracles which futurity will expound. We are led to these remarks, not merely for Milton's justification, but because our times seem

Hosted by Google

to demand them. Literature, we fear, is becoming too popular. The whole community is now turned into readers, and in this we heartily rejoice; and we rejoice too that so much talent is employed in making knowledge accessible to all. We hail the general diffusion of intelligence as the brightest feature of the present age. But good and evil are never disjoined; and one bad consequence of the multitude of readers is, that men of genius are too anxious to please the multitude, and prefer a present shout of popularity to that less tumultuous, but deeper, more thrilling note of the trump of Fame, which resounds and grows clearer and louder through all future ages.

We now come to a much more serious objection to Milton's prose writings, and that is, that they are disfigured by party spirit, coarse invective, and controversial asperity; and here we are prepared to say, that there are passages in these works which every admirer of his character must earnestly desire to expunge. Milton's alleged virulence was manifested toward private and public foes. The first, such as Salmasius and Morus, deserved no mercy. They poured out on his spotless character torrents of calumny, charging him with the blackest vices of the heart and the foulest enormities of the life. It ought to be added, that the manners and spirit of Milton's age justified a retaliation on such offenders, which the more courteous, and, we will hope, more Christian spirit of the present times will not tolerate. Still we mean not to be his apologists. Milton, raised as he was above his age, and fortified with the consciousness of high virtue, ought to have been, both to his own and future times, an example of Christian equanimity. In regard to the public enemies whom

Hosted by Google

he assailed, we mean the despots in church and state, and the corrupt institutions which had stirred up a civil war, the general strain of his writings, though strong and stern, must exalt him, notwithstanding his occasional violence, among the friends of civil and religious liberty. That liberty was in peril. Great evils were struggling for perpetuity, and could only be broken down by great power. Milton felt that interests of infinite moment were at stake; and who will blame him for binding himself to them with the whole energy of his great mind, and for defending them with fervor and vehemence? We must not mistake Christian benevolence, as if it had but one voice, that of soft entreaty It can speak in piercing and awful tones. There is constantly going on in our world a conflict between good and evil. The cause of human nature has always to wrestle with foes. All improvement is a victory won by struggles. It is especially true of those great periods which have been distinguished by revolutions in government and religion, and from which we date the most rapid movements of the human mind, that they have been signalized by conflict. Thus Christianity convulsed the world and grew up amidst storms; and the Reformation of Luther was a signal to universal war; and Liberty in both worlds has encountered opposition, over which she has triumphed only through her own immortal energies. At such periods, men, gifted with great power of thought and loftiness of sentiment, are especially summoned to the conflict with evil. They hear, as it were, in their own magnanimity and generous aspirations, the voice of a divinity; and thus commissioned, and burning with a passionate devotion to truth and freedom, they must and will speak with

Hosted by Google

an indignant energy, and they ought not to be measured by the standard of ordinary minds in ordinary times. Men of natural softness and timidity, of a sincere but effeminate virtue, will be apt to look on these bolder, hardier spirits, as violent, perturbed, and uncharitable; and the charge will not be wholly groundless. But that deep feeling of evils, which is necessary to effectual conflict with them, and which marks God's most powerful messengers to mankind, cannot breathe itself in soft and tender accents. The deeply moved soul will speak strongly, and ought to speak so as to move and shake nations.

We have offered these remarks as strongly applicable to Milton. He reverenced and loved human nature, and attached himself to its great interests with a fervor of which only such a mind was capable. He lived in one of those solemn periods which determine the character of ages to come. His spirit was stirred to its very centre by the presence of danger. He lived in the midst of the battle. That the ardor of his spirit sometimes passed the bounds of wisdom and charity, and poured forth unwarrantable invective, we see and lament. But the purity and loftiness of his mind break forth amidst his bitterest invectives. We see a noble nature still. We see, that no feigned love of truth and freedom was a covering for selfishness and malignity. He did indeed love and adore uncorrupted religion, and intellectual liberty, and let his name be enrolled among their truest champions. Milton has told us, in his own noble style, that he entered on his principal controversy with Episcopacy reluctantly, and only through a deep conviction of duty. The introduction to the second book of his "Reason of Church Gov-

Hosted by Google

ernment" shows us the workings of his mind on this subject, and is his best vindication from the charge we are now repelling. He says;

"Surely to every good and peaceable man, it must in nature needs be a hateful thing, to be the displeaser and molester of thousands; much better would it like him, doubtless, to be the messenger of gladness and contentment, which is his chief intended business to all mankind, but that they resist and oppose their own true happiness. But when God commands to take the trumpet, and blow a dolorous, or a jarring blast, it lies not in man's will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal. . . . . This I foresee, that should the church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have given me ability the while to reason against that man that should be the author of so foul a deed, or should she, by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithful men, change this her distracted estate into better days, without the least furtherance or contribution of those few talents which God at that present had lent me; I foresee what stories I should hear within myself, all my life after, of discourage and reproach. 'Timorous and ungrateful, the church of God is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies, and thou bewailest; what matters it for thee or thy bewailing? When time was, thou couldst not find a syllable of all that thou hast read or studied, to utter in her behalf. Yet ease and leisure was given thee for thy retired thoughts, out of the sweat of other men. Thou hadst the diligence, the parts, the language of a man, if a vain subject were to be adorned or beautified; but when the cause of God and his church was to be pleaded, for which purpose that tongue was given thee which thou hast, God listened if he could hear thy voice among his zealous servants, but thou wert dumb as a beast; from henceforward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee.' . . . . . But now, by this little diligence, mark what a privilege I have gained with good men and saints, to claim my right of lamenting the tribulations of the church, if she should suffer, when others, that have ventured nothing for her sake, have not the honor to be admitted mourners. But, if she lift up her drooping head and prosper, among those that have something more than wished her welfare, I have my charter and freehold of rejoicing to me and my heirs.

Hosted by Google

"Concerning therefore this wayward subject against prelaty, the touching whereof is so distasteful and disquietous to a number of men, as by what hath been said I may deserve of charitable readers to be credited, that neither envy nor gall hath entered me upon this controversy, but the enforcement of conscience only, and a preventive fear lest the omitting of this duty should be against me, when I would store up to myself the good provision of peaceful hours." — *Vol. I. pp.* 139 – 141.*

He then goes on to speak of his consciousness of possessing great poetical powers, which he was most anxious to cultivate. Of these he speaks thus magnificently; —

"These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed, but yet to some, though most abuse, in every nation; and are of power, — to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue, and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship; lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtilties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within; all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe." — *Vol. I. pp.* 145, 146.

He then gives intimations of his having proposed to himself a great poetical work, "a work," he says, —

"Not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapors of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of

* From the introduction to the second book of "The Reason of Church Government," &c. Vol. I. pp. 137, &c. of "A Selection from the English Prose Works of John Milton, Boston, 1826," to which all our references are made.

Hosted by Google

some vulgar amourist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her syren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases." — *Vol. I. p.* 148.

He then closes with a passage, showing from what principles he forsook these delightful studies for controversy; —

"I trust hereby to make it manifest with what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, put from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies. . . . . But were it the meanest underservice, if God by his secretary conscience enjoin it, it were sad for me if I should draw back; for me especially, now when all men offer their aid to help, ease, and lighten the difficult labors of the church, to whose service, by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions, till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either strait perjure or split his faith, I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing." — *Vol. I. p.* 149.

These passages, replete with Milton's genius and greatness of soul, show us the influences and motives under which his prose works were written, and help us to interpret passages, which, if taken separately, might justify us in ascribing to him a character of excessive indignation and scorn.

Milton's most celebrated prose work is his "Areopagitica, or a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing," a noble work indeed, a precious manual of free-

Hosted by Google

dom, an arsenal of immortal weapons for the defence of man's highest prerogative, intellectual liberty. His "Reformation in England" and "Reason of Church Government" are the most important theological treatises published during his life. They were his earliest prose compositions, and thrown off with much haste, and on these accounts are more chargeable with defects of style, than any other of his writings. But these, with all their defects, abound in strong and elevated thought, and in power and felicity of expression. Their great blemish is an inequality of style, often springing from the conflict and opposition of the impulses under which he wrote. It is not uncommon to find, in the same sentence, his affluent genius pouring forth magnificent images and expressions, and suddenly his deep scorn for his opponents, suggesting and throwing into the midst of this splendor sarcasms and degrading comparisons altogether at variance with the general strain. From this cause, and from negligence, many powerful passages in his prose writings are marred by an incongruous mixture of unworthy allusions and phrases. In the close of his first work, that on "Reformation in England," he breaks out into an invocation and prayer to the Supreme Being, from which we extract a passage containing a remarkable intimation of his having meditated some great poetical enterprise from his earliest years, and giving full promise of that grandeur of thought and language which characterizes "Paradise Lost." Having "lifted up his hands to that eternal and propitious Throne, where nothing is readier than grace and refuge to the distresses of mortal suppliants," and besought God to perfect the work of civil and religious deliverance begun in England, he proceeds thus; —

Hosted by Google

"Then, amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, *some one may perhaps be heard* offering at high strains in new and lofty measures, to sing and celebrate thy divine mercies, and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages, whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her old vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day, when Thou, the eternal and shortly expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and, distributing national honors and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth; where they undoubtedly, that by their labors, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive, above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities, legions, and thrones into their glorious titles, and, in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever."

Vol. I. pp. 69, 70.

We have not time to speak of Milton's political treatises. We close our brief remarks on his prose writings, with recommending them to all who can enjoy great beauties in the neighbourhood of great faults, and who would learn the compass, energy, and richness of our language; and still more do we recommend them to those, who desire to nourish in their breast magnanimity of sentiment and an unquenchable love of freedom. They bear the impress of that seal by which genius distinguishes its productions from works of learning and taste. The great and decisive test of genius is, that it calls forth *power* in the souls of others. It not merely gives knowledge, but breathes energy. There are authors, and among these Milton holds the highest

Hosted by Google

rank, in approaching whom we are conscious of an access of intellectual strength. A "virtue goes out" from them. We discern more clearly, not merely because a new light is thrown over objects, but because our own vision is strengthened. Sometimes a single word, spoken by the voice of genius, goes far into the heart. A hint, a suggestion, an undefined delicacy of expression, teaches more than we gather from volumes of less gifted men. The works which we should chiefly study, are not those which contain the greatest fund of knowledge, but which raise us into sympathy with the intellectual energy of the author, and through which a great mind multiplies itself, as it were, in the reader. Milton's prose works are imbued as really, if not as thoroughly, as his poetry, with this quickening power, and they will richly reward those who are receptive of this influence.

We now leave the writings of Milton to offer a few remarks on his *moral* qualities. His moral character was as strongly marked as his intellectual, and it may be expressed in one word, *magnanimity*. It was in harmony with his poetry. He had a passionate love of the higher, more commanding, and majestic virtues, and fed his youthful mind with meditations on the perfection of a human being. In a letter written to an Italian friend before his thirtieth year, and translated by Hayley, we have this vivid picture of his aspirations after virtue; —

"As to other points, what God may have determined for me I know not; but this I know, that if he ever instilled an intense love of moral beauty into the breast of any man, he has instilled it into mine. Ceres, in the fable, pursued not her daughter with a greater keenness of

Hosted by Google

inquiry, than I day and night the idea of perfection. Hence, wherever I find a man despising the false estimates of the vulgar, and daring to aspire, in sentiment, language, and conduct, to what the highest wisdom, through every age, has taught us as most excellent, to him I unite myself by a sort of necessary attachment; and if I am so influenced by nature or destiny, that by no exertion or labors of my own I may exalt myself to this summit of worth and honor, yet no powers of heaven or earth will hinder me from looking with reverence and affection upon those, who have thoroughly attained this glory, or appeared engaged in the successful pursuit of it."

His "Comus" was written in his twenty-sixth year, and on reading this exquisite work our admiration is awakened, not so much by observing how the whole spirit of poetry had descended on him at that early age, as by witnessing how his whole youthful soul was penetrated, awed, and lifted up by the austere charms, "the radiant light," the invincible power, the celestial peace of saintly virtue. He reverenced moral purity and elevation, not only for its own sake, but as the inspirer of intellect, and especially of the higher efforts of poetry. "I was confirmed," he says, in his usual noble style, —

"I was confirmed in this opinion; that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing of high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy."

Vol. I. pp. 237, 238.

We learn from his works, that he used his multifarious reading to build up within himself this reverence for virtue. Ancient history, the sublime musings of Plato, and the heroic self-abandonment of chivalry, joined their influences with prophets and apostles, in binding him "everlastingly in willing homage" to the

Hosted by Google

great, the honorable, and the lovely in character. A remarkable passage to this effect, we quote from his account of his youth ; —

"I betook me among those lofty fables and romances, which recount, in solemn cantos, the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence had in renown over all Christendom. There I read it in the oath of every knight, that he should defend to the expense of his best blood or of his life, if it so befell him, the honor and chastity of virgin or matron ; from whence even then I learned what a noble virtue chastity sure must be, to the defence of which so many worthies by such a dear adventure of themselves, had sworn. . . . . So that even these, books which to many others have been the fuel of wontonness and loose living, I cannot think how, unless by divine indulgence, proved to me so many incitements, as you have heard, to the love and steadfast observation of virtue." — *Vol. I. pp.* 238, 239.

All Milton's habits were expressive of a refined and self-denying character. When charged by his unprincipled slanderers with licentious habits, he thus gives an account of his morning hours ; —

"Those morning haunts are where they should be, at home ; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring, in winter often ere the sound of any bell awake men to labor, or devotion ; in summer as oft with the bird that first rouses, or not much tardier, to read good authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention be weary or memory have its full fraught; then with useful and generous labors preserving the body's health and hardiness, to render lightsome, clear, and not lumpish obedience to the mind, to the cause of religion, and our country's liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations, rather than to see the ruin of our protestation, and the enforcement of a slavish life." — *Vol. I. p.* 233.

We have enlarged on the strictness and loftiness of Milton's virtue, not only from our interest in the sub-

Hosted by Google

ject, but that we may put to shame and silence, those men who make genius an apology for vice, and take the sacred fire, kindled by God within them, to inflame men's passions, and to minister to a vile sensuality.

We see Milton's greatness of mind in his fervent and constant attachment to liberty. Freedom, in all its forms and branches, was dear to him, but especially freedom of thought and speech, of conscience and worship, freedom to seek, profess, and propagate truth. The liberty of ordinary politicians, which protects men's outward rights, and removes restraints from the pursuit of property and outward good, fell very short of that for which Milton lived, and was ready to die. The tyranny which he hated most was that, which broke the intellectual and moral power of the community. The worst feature of the institutions which he assailed was, that they fettered the mind. He felt within himself, that the human mind had a principle of perpetual growth, that it was essentially diffusive and made for progress, and he wished every chain broken, that it might run the race of truth and virtue with increasing ardor and success. This attachment to a spiritual and refined freedom, which never forsook him in the hottest controversies, contributed greatly to protect his genius, imagination, taste, and sensibility, from the withering and polluting influences of public station, and of the rage of parties. It threw a hue of poetry over politics, and gave a sublime reference to his service of the commonwealth. The fact that Milton, in that stormy day, and amidst the trials of public office, kept his high faculties undepraved, was a proof of no common greatness. Politics, however they make the intellect active, sagacious, and inventive, within a cer-

Hosted by Google

tain sphere, generally extinguish its thirst for universal truth, paralyze sentiment and imagination, corrupt the simplicity of the mind, destroy that confidence in human virtue, which lies at the foundation of philanthropy and generous sacrifices, and end in cold and prudent selfishness. Milton passed through a revolution, which, in its last stages and issue, was peculiarly fitted to damp enthusiasm, to scatter the visions of hope, and to infuse doubts of the reality of virtuous principle; and yet the ardor, and moral feeling, and enthusiasm of his youth came forth unhurt, and even exalted, from the trial.

Before quitting the subject of Milton's devotion to liberty, it ought to be recorded, that he wrote his celebrated "Defence of the People of England," after being distinctly forewarned by his physicians, that the effect of this exertion would be the utter loss of sight. His reference to this part of his history, in a short poetical effusion, is too characteristic to be withheld. It is inscribed to Cyriac Skinner, the friend to whom he appears to have confided his lately discovered "Treatise on Christian Doctrine."

"Cyriac, this three years day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot,
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overplied
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask,
Content though blind, had I no better guide."

Sonnet XXII.

Hosted by Google

We see Milton's magnanimity in the circumstances under which "Paradise Lost" was written. It was not in prosperity, in honor, and amidst triumphs, but in disappointment, desertion, and in what the world calls disgrace, that he composed that work. The cause, with which he had identified himself, had failed. His friends were scattered; liberty was trodden under foot; and her devoted champion was a by-word among the triumphant royalists. But it is the prerogative of true greatness to glorify itself in adversity, and to meditate and execute vast enterprises in defeat. Milton, fallen in outward condition, afflicted with blindness, disappointed in his best hopes, applied himself with characteristic energy to the sublimest achievement of intellect, solacing himself with great thoughts, with splendid creations, and with a prophetic confidence, that, however neglected in his own age, he was framing in his works a bond of union and fellowship with the illustrious spirits of a brighter day. We delight to contemplate him in his retreat and last years. To the passing spectator, he seemed fallen and forsaken, and his blindness was reproached as a judgment from God. But though sightless, he lived in light. His inward eye ranged through universal nature, and his imagination shed on it brighter beams than the sun. Heaven, and hell, and paradise were open to him. He visited past ages, and gathered round him ancient sages and heroes, prophets and apostles, brave knights and gifted bards. As he looked forward, ages of liberty dawned and rose to his view, and he felt that he was about to bequeath to them an inheritance of genius, "which would not fade away," and was to live in the memory, reverence, and love, of remotest generations.

Hosted by Google

We have enlarged on Milton's character, not only from the pleasure of paying that sacred debt which the mind owes to him who has quickened and delighted it, but from an apprehension that Milton has not yet reaped his due harvest of esteem and veneration. The mists which the prejudices and bigotry of Johnson spread over his bright name, are not yet wholly scattered, though fast passing away. We wish not to disparage Johnson. We could find no pleasure in sacrificing one great man to the *manes* of another. But we owe it to Milton and to other illustrious names, to say, that Johnson has failed of the highest end of biography, which is to give immortality to virtue, and to call forth fervent admiration towards those who have shed splendor on past ages. We acquit Johnson, however, of intentional misrepresentation. He did not, and could not, appreciate Milton. We doubt whether two other minds, having so little in common as those of which we are now speaking, can be found in the higher walks of literature. Johnson was great in his own sphere, but that sphere was comparatively "of the earth," whilst Milton's was only inferior to that of angels. It was customary, in the day of Johnson's glory, to call him a giant, to class him with a mighty, but still an earth-born race. Milton we should rank among seraphs. Johnson's mind acted chiefly on man's actual condition, on the realities of life, on the springs of human action, on the passions which now agitate society, and he seems hardly to have dreamed of a higher state of the human mind than was then exhibited. Milton, on the other hand, burned with a deep, yet calm love of moral grandeur and celestial purity. He thought, not so much of what man is, as of what he might become. His own mind was a revelation to him

Hosted by Google

of a higher condition of humanity, and to promote this he thirsted and toiled for freedom, as the element for the growth and improvement of his nature. — In religion Johnson was gloomy and inclined to superstition, and on the subject of government leaned towards absolute power; and the idea of reforming either, never entered his mind but to disturb and provoke it. The church and the civil polity, under which he lived, seemed to him perfect, unless he may have thought that the former would be improved by a larger infusion of Romish rites and doctrines, and the latter by an enlargement of the royal prerogative. Hence a tame acquiescence in the present forms of religion and government marks his works. Hence we find so little in his writings which is electric and soul-kindling, and which gives the reader a consciousness of being made for a state of loftier thought and feeling than the present. Milton's whole soul, on the contrary, revolted against the maxims of legitimacy, hereditary faith, and servile reverence for established power. He could not brook the bondage to which men had bowed for ages. "Reformation" was the first word of public warning which broke from his youthful lips, and the hope of it was the solace of his declining years. The difference between Milton and Johnson may be traced, not only in these great features of mind, but in their whole characters. Milton was refined and spiritual in his habits, temperate almost to abstemiousness, and refreshed himself after intellectual effort by music. Johnson inclined to more sensual delights. Milton was exquisitely alive to the outward creation, to sounds, motions, and forms, to natural beauty and grandeur. Johnson, through defect of physical organization, if not through deeper deficiency, had little susceptibility of

Hosted by Google

these pure and delicate pleasures, and would not have exchanged the Strand for the vale of Tempe or the gardens of the Hesperides. How could Johnson be just to Milton! The comparison, which we have instituted, has compelled us to notice Johnson's defects. But we trust we are not blind to his merits. His stately march, his pomp and power of language, his strength of thought, his reverence for virtue and religion, his vigorous logic, his practical wisdom, his insight into the springs of human action, and the solemn pathos which occasionally pervades his descriptions of life and his references to his own history, command our willing admiration. That he wanted enthusiasm and creative imagination and lofty sentiment, was not his fault. We do not blame him for not being Milton. We love intellectual power in all its forms, and delight in the variety of mind. We blame him only that his passions, prejudices, and bigotry engaged him in the unworthy task of obscuring the brighter glory of one of the most gifted and virtuous men. We would even treat what we deem the faults of Johnson with a tenderness approaching respect; for they were results, to a degree which man cannot estimate, of a diseased, irritable, nervous, unhappy physical temperament, and belonged to the body more than to the mind. We only ask the friends of genius not to put their faith in Johnson's delineations of it. His biographical works are tinged with his notoriously strong prejudices, and, of all his "Lives," we hold that of Milton to be the most apocryphal.

We here close our general remarks on Milton's intellectual and moral qualities. We venerate him as a man of genius, but still more as a man of magnanimity

Hosted by Google

and Christian virtue, who regarded genius and poetry as sacred gifts, imparted to him, not to amuse men or to build up a reputation, but that he might quicken and call forth what was great and divine in his fellow-creatures, and might secure the only true fame, the admiration of minds which his writings were to kindle and exalt.

We come now to the examination of the newly discovered "Treatise on Christian Doctrine." This work, we have said, owes its chief interest to the character of its author. From its very nature, it cannot engage and fix general attention. It consists very much of collections of texts of Scripture, which, however exciting in their proper places, are read with little thought or emotion when taken from their ordinary connexion, and marshalled under systematic heads. Milton aims to give us the doctrines of revelation in its own words. We have them in a phraseology long familiar to us, and we are disappointed; for we expected to see them, not in the language of the Bible, but as existing in the mind of Milton, modified by his peculiar intellect and sensibility, combined and embodied with his various knowledge, illustrated by the analogies, brightened by the new lights, and clothed with the associations, with which they were surrounded by this gifted man. We hoped to see these doctrines as they were viewed by Milton in his moments of solemn feeling and deep contemplation, when they pervaded and moved his whole soul. Still there are passages in which Milton's mind is laid open to us. We refer to the parts of the work, where the peculiarity of his opinions obliges him to state his reasons for adopting

Hosted by Google

them; and these we value highly for the vigor and independence of intellect with which they are impressed. The work is plain and unambitious in style. Its characteristics are a calm earnestness, and that profound veneration for Scripture, which certain denominations of Christians, who have little congeniality with Milton, seem to claim as a monopoly.

His introduction is worthy every man's attention, as a deliberate, mild assertion of the dearest right of human nature, that of free inquiry.

"If I communicate the result of my inquiries to the world at large; if, as God is my witness, it be with a friendly and benignant feeling towards mankind, that I readily give as wide a circulation as possible to what I esteem my best and richest possession, I hope to meet with a candid reception from all parties, and that none at least will take unjust offence, even though many things should be brought to light, which will at once be seen to differ from certain received opinions. I earnestly beseech all lovers of truth, not to cry out that the church is thrown into confusion by that freedom of discussion and inquiry, which is granted to the schools, and ought certainly to be refused to no believer, since we are ordered *to prove all things*, and since the daily progress of the light of truth is productive, far less of disturbance to the church, than of illumination and edification."— *Vol. I. pp.* 5, 6.

"It has also been my object to make it appear from the opinions I shall be found to have advanced, whether new or old, of how much consequence to the Christian religion is the liberty, not only of winnowing and sifting every doctrine, but also of thinking and even writing respecting it, according to our individual faith and persuasion; an inference which will be stronger in proportion to the weight and importance of those opinions, or rather in proportion to the authority of Scripture, on the abundant testimony of which they rest. Without this liberty there is neither religion nor gospel, — force alone prevails, by which it is disgraceful for the Christian religion to be supported. Without this liberty we are still enslaved, not indeed, as formerly, under the divine law, but, what

Hosted by Google

is worst of all, under the law of man, or, to speak more truly, under a barbarous tyranny."— *Vol. I. pp.* 7, 8.

On that great subject, the character of God, Milton has given nothing particularly worthy of notice, except that he is more disposed, than Christians in general, to conceive of the Supreme Being under the forms and affections of human nature.

"If God habitually assign to himself the members and form of man, why should we be afraid of attributing to him what he attributes to himself, so long as what is imperfection and weakness, when viewed in reference to ourselves, be considered as most complete and excellent whenever it is imputed to God."— *Vol. I. p.* 23.

Milton is not the first Christian who has thought to render the Supreme Being more interesting by giving him human shape. We doubt the wisdom of this expedient. To spiritualize our conceptions of him seems to us the true process for strengthening our intimacy with him; for in this way only can we think of him as immediately present to our minds. As far as we give him a material form, we must assign to him a place, and that place will almost necessarily be a distant one, and thus we shall remove him from the soul, which is his true temple. Besides, a definite form clashes with God's infinity, which is his supreme distinction and on no account to be obscured; for, strange as it may seem to those who know not their own nature, this incomprehensible attribute is that which above all things constitutes the correspondence or adaptation, if we may so speak, of God to the human mind.

In treating of God's efficiency, Milton strenuously maintains human freedom, in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. He maintains, that God's decrees do not encroach on moral liberty; for

Hosted by Google

our free agency is the very object decreed and predestined by the Creator. He maintains, that some of the passages of Scripture, which speak of election, are to be understood of an election to outward privileges, not to everlasting life; and that in other texts, which relate to the future state, the election spoken of is not an arbitrary choice of individuals, but of that class or descriptions of persons, be it large or small, who shall comply with the prescribed terms of salvation; in other words, it is a conditional, not an absolute election, and such that every individual, if he will, may be included in it. Milton has so far told us truth. We wish that we could add, that he had thrown new light on free agency. This great subject has indeed baffled as yet the deepest thinkers, and seems now to be consigned, with other sublime topics, under the sweeping denomination of "metaphysics," to general neglect. But let it not be given up in despair. The time is coming, when the human intellect is to strike into new fields, and to view itself and its Creator and the universe from new positions, and we trust, that the darkness which has so long hung over our moral nature will be gradually dispersed. This attribute of free agency, through which an intelligent being is strictly and properly a cause, an agent, an originator of moral good or moral evil, and not a mere machine, determined by outward influences, or by a secret, yet resistless efficiency of God, which virtually makes Him the author and sole author of all human actions, — this moral freedom, which is the best image of the creative energy of the Deity, seems to us the noblest object of philosophical investigation. However questioned and darkened by a host of metaphysicians, it is recognised in the common con-

Hosted by Google

sciousness of every human being. It is the ground of responsibility, the fountain of moral feeling. It is involved in all moral judgments and affections, and thus gives to social life its whole interest; whilst it is the chief tie between the soul and its Creator. The fact that philosophers have attempted to discard free agency from their explanations of moral phenomena, and to subject all human action to necessity, to mechanical causes, or other extraneous influences, is proof enough, that the science of the mind has as yet penetrated little beneath the surface, that the depths of the soul are still unexplored.

Milton naturally passes from his chapter on the Supreme Being, to the consideration of those topics which have always been connected with this part of theology; we mean, the character of Jesus Christ, and the nature of the Holy Spirit. All our readers are probably aware, that Milton has here declared himself an Antitrinitarian, and strenuously asserted the strict and proper unity of God. His chapter on "The Son of God" is the most elaborate one in the work. His "Prefatory Remarks" are highly interesting, as joining with a manly assertion of his right, an affectionate desire to conciliate the Christians from whom he differed.

"I cannot enter upon subjects of so much difficulty as the *Son of God* and the *Holy Spirit*, without again premising a few introductory words. If indeed I were a member of the Church of Rome, which requires implicit obedience to its creed on all points of faith, I should have acquiesced from education or habit in its simple decree and authority, even though it denies that the doctrine of the Trinity, as now received, is capable of being proved from any passage of Scripture. But since I enroll myself among the number of those who acknowledge the Word of God alone as the rule of faith, and freely ad-

Hosted by Google

vance what appears to me much more clearly deducible from the Holy Scriptures than the commonly received opinion, I see no reason why any one, who belongs to the same Protestant or Reformed Church, and professes to acknowledge the same rule of faith as myself, should take offence at my freedom, particularly as I impose my authority on no one, but merely propose what I think more worthy of belief than the creed in general acceptation. I only entreat, that my readers will ponder and examine my statements in a spirit which desires to discover nothing but the truth, and with a mind free from prejudice. For, without intending to oppose the authority of Scripture, which I consider inviolably sacred, I only take upon myself to refute human interpretations as often as the occasion requires, conformably to my right, or rather to my duty, as a man. If indeed those, with whom I have to contend, were able to produce direct attestation from Heaven to the truth of the doctrine which they espouse, it would be nothing less than impiety to venture to raise, I do not say a clamor, but so much as a murmur against it. But, inasmuch as they can lay claim to nothing more than human powers, assisted by that spiritual illumination which is common to all, it is not unreasonable that they should on their part allow the privileges of diligent research and free discussion to another inquirer, who is seeking truth through the same means and in the same way as themselves, and whose desire of benefiting mankind is equal to their own." — *Vol. I. pp.* 103 – 105.

Milton teaches, that the Son of God is a distinct being from God, and inferior to him, that he existed before the world was made, that he is the first of the creation of God, and that afterwards all other things were made by him, as the instrument or minister of his Father. He maintains, in agreement with Dr. Clarke, that the Holy Spirit is a person, an intelligent agent, but created and inferior to God. This opinion of Milton is the more remarkable, because he admits, that, before the time of Christ, the Jews, though accustomed to the phrase, Holy Spirit, never attached to it the

Hosted by Google

idea of personality, and that, both in the Old and the New Testament, it is often used to express God himself, or his power and agency. It is strange, that, after these concessions, he could have found a difficulty in giving a figurative interpretation to the few passages in the New Testament, which speak of the Holy Spirit as a person.

We are unable within our limits to give a sketch of Milton's strong reasoning against the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ. We must, however, pause a moment to thank God that he has raised up this illustrious advocate of the long obscured doctrine of the Divine Unity. We can now bring forward the three greatest and noblest minds of modern times, and, we may add, of the Christian era, as witnesses to that Great Truth, of which, in an humbler and narrower sphere, we desire to be the defenders. Our Trinitarian adversaries are perpetually ringing in our ears the names of Fathers and Reformers. We take Milton, Locke, and Newton, and place them in our front, and want no others to oppose to the whole array of great names on the opposite side. Before these intellectual suns, the stars of self-named Orthodoxy "hide their diminished heads." To these eminent men God communicated such unusual measures of light and mental energy, that their names spring up spontaneously, when we think or would speak of the greatness of our nature. Their theological opinions were the fruits of patient, profound, reverent study of the Scriptures. They came to this work with minds not narrowed by a technical, professional education, but accustomed to broad views, to the widest range of thought. They were shackled by no party connexions. They were warped by no clerical

Hosted by Google

ambition, and subdued by no clerical timidity. They came to this subject in the fulness of their strength, with free minds open to truth, and with unstained purity of life. They came to it in an age, when the doctrine of the Trinity was instilled by education, and upheld by the authority of the church, and by penal laws. And what did these great and good men, whose intellectual energy and love of truth have made them the chief benefactors of the human mind, what, we ask, did they discover in the Scriptures? a triple divinity? three infinite agents? three infinite objects of worship? three persons, each of whom possesses his own distinct offices, and yet shares equally in the godhead with the rest? No! Scripture joined with nature and with that secret voice in the heart, which even idolatry could not always stifle, and taught them to bow reverently before the One Infinite Father, and to ascribe to him alone, supreme, self-existent divinity. — Our principal object in these remarks has been to show, that, as far as great names are arguments, the cause of Anti-trinitarianism, or of God's proper Unity, is supported by the strongest. But we owe it to truth to say, that we put little trust in these fashionable proofs. The chief use of great names in religious controversy is, to balance and neutralize one another, that the unawed and unfettered mind may think and judge with a due self-reverence, and with a solemn sense of accountableness to God alone.

We have called Milton an Anti-trinitarian. But we have no desire to identify him with any sect. His mind was too independent and universal to narrow itself to human creeds and parties. He is supposed to have separated himself, in his last years, from all the denomi-

Hosted by Google

nations around him; and, were he now living, we are not sure that he would find one, to which he would be strongly attracted. He would probably stand first among that class of Christians, more numerous than is supposed, and, we hope, increasing, who are too jealous of the rights of the mind, and too dissatisfied with the clashing systems of the age, to attach themselves closely to any party; in whom the present improved state of theology has created a consciousness of defect, rather than the triumph of acquisition; who, however partial to their own creed, cannot persuade themselves, that it is the ultimate attainment of the human mind, and that distant ages will repeat its articles as reverently as the Catholics do the decrees of Trent; who contend earnestly for free inquiry, not because all who inquire will think as they do, but because some at least may be expected to outstrip them, and to be guides to higher truth. With this nameless and spreading class we have strong sympathies. We want new light, and care not whence it comes; we want reformers worthy of the name; and we should rejoice in such a manifestation of Christianity, as would throw all present systems into obscurity.

We come now to a topic on which Milton will probably startle a majority of readers. He is totally opposed, as were most of the ancient philosophers, to the doctrine of God's creating the universe out of nothing. He maintains, that there can be no action without a passive material on which the act is exerted, and that accordingly the world was framed out of a preëxistent matter. To the question, What and whence is this primary matter? he answers, It is from God, "an efflux of the Deity." "It proceeded from God," and conse-

Hosted by Google

quently no additional existence was produced by creation, nor is matter capable of annihilation. A specimen of his speculations on this subject, is given in the following quotation.

"It is clear then, that the world was framed out of matter of some kind or other. For, since action and passion are relative terms, and since, consequently, no agent can act externally, unless there be some patient, such as matter, it appears impossible that God could have created this world out of nothing; not from any defect of power on his part, but because it was necessary that something should have previously existed capable of receiving passively the exertion of the divine efficacy. Since, therefore, both Scripture and reason concur in pronouncing that all these things were made, not out of nothing, but out of matter, it necessarily follows, that matter must either have always existed independently of God, or have originated from God at some particular point of time. That matter should have been always independent of God, (seeing that it is only a passive principle, dependent on the Deity, and subservient to him; and seeing, moreover, that as in number, considered abstractly, so also in time or eternity, there is no inherent force or efficacy,) that matter, I say, should have existed of itself from all eternity, is inconceivable. If, on the contrary, it did not exist from all eternity, it is difficult to understand from whence it derives its origin. There remains, therefore, but one solution of the difficulty, for which moreover we have the authority of Scripture, namely, that all things are of God." — *Vol. I. pp.* 236, 237.

This doctrine naturally led Milton to another; viz. that there is no ground for the supposed distinction between body and soul; for, if matter is an "efflux of the Deity," it is plainly susceptible of intellectual functions. Accordingly our author affirms, —

"That man is a living being, intrinsically and properly one and individual, not compound or separable, not according to the common opinion, made up and framed of two distinct and different natures, as of soul and body,

Hosted by Google

— but the whole man is soul, and the soul man; that is to say, a body, or substance, individual, animated, sensitive, and rational." — *Vol. I. pp.* 250, 251.

We here learn that a passage in "Paradise Lost," which we have admired as poetry, was deemed by Milton sound philosophy.

"O Adam, One Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not depraved from good, created all
Such to perfection, *one first matter all,*
Indued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and, in things that live, of life:
But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,
As nearer to him placed or nearer tending,
Each in their several active spheres assigned,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More aery, last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes; flowers and their fruit,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,
To *intellectual.*" — *Par. Lost. B. V. lines* 469 – 485.

These speculations of Milton will be received in this age with more favor, or with less aversion, than in his own; for, from the time of Locke, the discussions of philosophers have tended to unsettle our notions of matter, and no man is hardy enough now to say what it is, or what it may not be. The idealism of Berkeley, though it has never organized a sect, has yet sensibly influenced the modes of thinking among metaphysicians; and the coincidence of this system with the theory of certain Hindoo philosophers may lead us to suspect, that it contains some great latent truth, of which the European and Hindoo intellect, so generally at variance, have caught a glimpse. Matter is indeed a Proteus, which escapes us at the moment we hope to seize

Hosted by Google

it. Priestley was anxious to make the soul material; but, for this purpose, he was obliged to change matter from a substance into a power, that is, into no matter at all; so that he destroyed, in attempting to diffuse it. We have thrown out these remarks, to rescue Milton's memory from the imputation, which he was the last man to deserve, of irreverence towards God; for of this some will deem him guilty in tracing matter to the Deity as its fountain. Matter, which seems to common people so intelligible, is still wrapped in mystery. We know it only by its relation to mind, or as an assemblage of powers to awaken certain sensations. Of its relation to God, we may be said to know nothing. Perhaps, as knowledge advances, we shall discover, that the Creator is bound to his works by stronger and more intimate ties, than we now imagine. We do not then quarrel with such suggestions as Milton's, though we cannot but wonder at the earnestness with which he follows out such doubtful speculations.

Milton next proceeds to the consideration of man's state in Paradise, and, as marriage was the only social relation then subsisting, he introduces here his views of that institution, and of polygamy and divorce. These views show, if not the soundness, yet the characteristic independence of his mind. No part of his book has given such offence as his doctrine of the lawfulness of polygamy, and yet nowhere is he less liable to reproach. It is plain that his error was founded on his reverence for Scripture. He saw that polygamy was allowed to the best men in the Old Testament, to patriarchs before the law, who, he says, were the objects of God's special favor, and to eminent individuals in subsequent ages; and, finding no prohibition of it in the New Tes

Hosted by Google

tament, he believed, that not only holy men would be traduced, but Scripture dishonored, by pronouncing it morally evil. We are aware that some will say, that the practice *is* condemned in the New Testament; and we grant that it is censured by implication in these words of Christ, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." * But we believe it to be an indisputable fact, that, although Christianity was first preached in Asia, which had been from the earliest ages the seat of polygamy, the Apostles never denounced it as a crime, and never required their converts to put away all wives but one. "What then?" some may say. "Are you too the advocates of the lawfulness of polygamy?" We answer, No. We consider our religion as decidedly hostile to this practice; and we add, what seems to us of great importance, that this hostility is not the less decided, because no express prohibition of polygamy is found in the New Testament; for Christianity is not a system of precise legislation, marking out with literal exactness every thing to be done, and every thing to be avoided; but an inculcation of broad principles, which it intrusts to individuals and to society to be applied according to their best discretion. It is through this generous peculiarity, that Christianity is fitted to be a universal religion. Through this, it can subsist and blend itself with all stages of society, and can live in the midst of abuses, which it silently and powerfully overcomes, but against which it would avail little, were it immediately to lift up the voice of denunciation. We all know that long-cherished corruptions, which have sent their roots

* Matt. xix. 9.

Hosted by Google

through the whole frame of a community, cannot be torn up at once, without dissolving society. To Christianity is committed the sublime office of eradicating all the errors and evils of the world; but this it does by a process corresponding with man's nature, by working a gradual revolution in the mind, which, in its turn, works a safe and effectual revolution in manners and life. No argument, therefore, in favor of a practice, can be ad duced from the fact, that it is not explicitly reprobated in the New Testament. For example, Christianity went forth into communities, where multitudes were held in slavery, and all ranks were ground and oppressed by despotism; abuses on which the spirit of our religion frowns as sternly as on any which can be named. Yet Christianity did not command the master to free his slaves, or the despot to descend from his absolute throne; but satisfied itself with proclaiming sublime truths in regard to God's paternal character and administration, and broad and generous principles of action, leaving to these the work of breaking every chain, by a gradual, inward, irresistible influence, and of asserting the essential equality and unalienable rights of the whole human race. — We cannot leave this topic, without adding, that not only Milton's error on polygamy, but many other noxious mistakes, have resulted from measuring Christianity by the condition of the primitive church, as if *that* were the standard of faith and practice, as if every thing allowed then were wise and good, as if the religion were then unfolded in all its power and extent. The truth is, that Christianity was then in its infancy. The Apostles communicated its great truths to the rude minds of Jews and Heathens; but the primitive church did not, and could not, under-

Hosted by Google

stand all that was involved in those principles, all the applications of which they are susceptible, all the influences they were to exert on the human mind, all the combinations they were to form with the new truths which time was to unfold, all the new lights in which they were to be placed, all the adaptations to human nature and to more advanced states of society, which they were progressively to manifest. In the first age, the religion was administered with a wise and merciful conformity to the capacities of its recipients. With the progress of intelligence, and the developement of the moral faculties, Christianity is freeing itself, and ought to be freed, from the local, temporary, and accidental associations of its childhood. Its great principles are coming forth more distinctly and brightly, and condemning abuses and errors, which have passed current for ages. This great truth, for such we deem it, that Christianity is a growing light, and that it must be more or less expounded by every age for itself, was not sufficiently apprehended by Milton; nor is it now understood as it will be. For want of apprehending it, Christianity is administered now, too much as it was in ages, when nothing of our literature, philosophy, and spirit of improvement existed; and consequently it does not, we fear, exert that entire and supreme sway over strong and cultivated minds, which is its due, and which it must one day obtain.

Milton has connected with polygamy the subject of divorce, on which he is known to have differed from many Christians. He strenuously maintains in the work under review, and more largely in other treatises, that the violation of the marriage bed is not the sole ground of divorce, but that "the perpetual interruption of

Hosted by Google

peace and affection, by mutual differences and unkindness, is a sufficient reason" for dissolving the conjugal relation. On this topic we cannot enlarge.

We now arrive at that part of Milton's work, in which his powerful mind might have been expected to look beyond the prevalent opinions of his day, but in which he has followed the beaten road, almost without deviation, seldom noticing difficulties, and hardly seeming to know their existence. We refer to the great subjects of the moral condition of mankind, and of redemption by Jesus Christ. The doctrine of original sin he has assumed as true, and his faith in it was evidently strengthened by his doctrine of the identity of the soul with the body, in consequence of which he teaches, that souls are propagated from parents to children, and not immediately derived from God, and that they are born with an hereditary taint, just as the body contracts hereditary disease. It is humbling to add, that he supports this doctrine of the propagation of sin by physical contagion, on the ground that it relieves the Creator from the charge of originating the corruption, which we are said to bring into life; as if the infinitely pure and good God could, by a covert agency, infect with moral evil the passive and powerless mind of the infant, and then absolve himself of the horrible work by imputing it to instruments of his own ordination! Milton does not, however, believe in total depravity, feeling that this would free men from guilt, by taking away all power; and he therefore leaves us a portion of the divine image, not enough to give us a chance of virtue, but enough to take away excuse from sin. Such are the "tender mercies" of theology! With respect to Christ's mediation, he supposes, that Christ saves us by bearing our

Hosted by Google

punishment, and in this way satisfying God's justice His views indeed are not expressed with much precision, and seem to have been formed without much investigation. On these great subjects, of human nature and redemption, we confess, we are disappointed in finding the spirit of Milton satisfying itself with the degrading notions which prevailed around him. But we remember, that it is the order of Providence, that the greatest minds should sympathize much with their age, and that they contribute the more to the progress of mankind, by not advancing too fast and too far beyond their contemporaries. In this part of his work, Milton maintains, that the death threatened to sin extends equally to body and soul, which indeed he was bound to do, as he holds the soul and body to be one; and he then proceeds to defend, with his usual power, the necessary inference, that all consciousness is suspended between death and the resurrection. We have no faith in this doctrine; but we respect the courage with which he admits and maintains whatever can be fairly deduced from his opinions.

Having concluded the subject of redemption, he passes to what he calls "man's renovation, or the change whereby the sinner is brought into a state of grace;" and here, though he is not always perspicuous, yet he seldom deviates from what was then the beaten road. We owe it, however, to Milton, to say, that, although he sometimes approached, he never adopted Calvinism. All the distinguished articles of that creed, total depravity, election and reprobation, Christ dying for the elect only, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, and justification by mere faith, all are denied and opposed by him, and some with great strength.

Hosted by Google

Swayed as Milton was by the age in which he lived, his spirit could not be subdued to the heart-withering faith of the Genevan school.

We now come to a subject in which Milton was deeply interested; we mean Christian Liberty, under which head may be included the discipline of the church, the power of ministers, and the rights of the people. To vindicate the liberty of Christians, and to secure them from all outward impositions and ordinances, he maintains that the whole Mosaic law is abolished, so that no part is binding on Christians; a doctrine which may startle many, who believe that the moral precepts of that law are as binding now as ever. But such persons differ little in reality from Milton, whose true meaning is, that these precepts bind Christians, not through the authority of Moses, which is wholly done away, but only because they are taken up and incorporated into Christianity, which is our only law, and which has set forth whatever was permanently valuable in Judaism, in a more perfect form, and with more powerful sanctions.

As another branch of the liberty of Christians, he maintains, as we may well suppose, the right of every believer to consult the Scriptures and to judge of them for himself. Not satisfied with this, he takes the ground of Quakerism, and maintains that the Christian, in addition to the Scriptures, has an inward guide, with which no human authority should interfere.

"Under the gospel we possess, as it were, a twofold Scripture, one external, which is the written word, and the other internal, which is the Holy Spirit, written in the hearts of believers, according to the promise of God, and with the intent that it should by no means be neglected." —*Vol. II. p.* 172. "The external scripture . . . . . has

Hosted by Google

been liable to frequent corruption, and in some instances has been corrupted, through the number, and occasionally the bad faith, of those by whom it has been handed down, the variety and discrepancy of the original manuscripts, and the additional diversity produced by subsequent transcripts and printed editions. But the Spirit which leads to truth cannot be corrupted, neither is it easy to deceive a man who is really spiritual."—*p.* 173. "It is difficult to conjecture the purpose of Providence in committing the writings of the New Testament to such uncertain and variable guardianship, unless it were to teach us, by this very circumstance, that the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than Scripture, whom, therefore, it is our duty to follow."—*p.* 174. "Hence it follows, that when an acquiescence in human opinions or an obedience to human authority in matters of religion is exacted, in the name either of the church or of the Christian magistrate, from those who are themselves led individually by the Spirit of God, this is in effect to impose a yoke, not on man, but on the Holy Spirit itself."—*p.* 176.

This, in words, is genuine Quakerism; but whether Milton understood by the Holy Spirit that *immediate* revelation, which forms the leading doctrine of that creed, we doubt. To this doctrine it may be objected, and we think Milton must have felt the objection, that it disparages and discourages our faculties, and produces inaction of mind, leading men to expect from a sudden flash from Heaven, the truth which we are taught to seek by the right use of our own powers. We imagine that Milton believed, that the Holy Spirit works with and by our own understandings, and, instead of superseding reason, invigorates and extends it. But this is not the only place where his precise views are obscured by general expressions, or by rapid and superficial notices of subjects.

In Milton's views of the church and the ministry,

Hosted by Google

we have other proofs of his construing the Scriptures in the manner most favorable to Christian liberty. He teaches, that the universal church has no head but Christ, and that the power arrogated by popes, councils, and bishops, is gross usurpation. In regard to particular churches, he is a strict Congregationalist. Each church, he says, is competent to its own government, and connected with others only by the bond of charity. No others are authorized to interfere with any of its concerns, but in the way of brotherly counsel.

"Every church consisting of the above parts," i. e. well instructed believers, "however small its numbers, is to be considered as in itself an integral and perfect church, so far as regards its religious rights; nor has it any superior on earth, whether individual, or assembly, or convention, to whom it can be lawfully required to render submission; inasmuch as no believer out of its pale, nor any order or council of men whatever, has a greater right than itself, to expect a participation in the written word and the promises, in the presence of Christ, in the presiding influence of the Spirit, and in those gracious gifts which are the reward of united prayer."

Vol. II. p. 194.

The choice of the minister, he says, belongs to the people. The minister, if possible, should serve the church gratuitously, and live by the labor of his own hands. This unpaid service he pronounces more noble and consonant to our Lord's example and that of the Apostles. In accordance with these views, he favors the idea of a church consisting of few members.

"All that pertains to the worship of God and the salvation of believers, all, in short, that is necessary to constitute a church, may be duly and orderly transacted in a particular church, within the walls of a private house, and where the numbers assembled are inconsiderable. Nay, such a church, when in compliance with the in-

Hosted by Google

terested views of its pastor it allows of an increase of numbers beyond what is convenient, deprives itself in a great measure of the advantages to be derived from meeting in common."— *Vol. II. p.* 194.

He maintains, that ministers are not to monopolize public instruction, or the administration of the ordinances ; but that all Christians, having sufficient gifts, are to participate in these services.

"The custom of holding assemblies is to be maintained, not after the present mode, but according to the apostolical institution, which did not ordain that an individual, and he a stipendiary, should have the sole right of speaking from a higher place, but that each believer in turn should be authorized to speak, or prophesy, or teach, or exhort, according to his gifts ; insomuch that even the weakest among the brethren had the privilege of asking questions, and consulting the elders and more experienced members of the congregation."— *Vol. II. p.* 203. "Any believer is competent to act as an *ordinary minister*, according as convenience may require, provided only he be endowed with the necessary gifts ; these gifts constituting his mission."—*p.* 153. "If therefore it be competent to any believer whatever to preach the gospel, provided he be furnished with the requisite gifts, it is also competent to him to administer the rite of baptism ; inasmuch as the latter office is inferior to the former."—*p.* 157. "With regard to the Lord's supper also, it has been shown, in the preceding chapter, that all are entitled to participate in that rite, but that the privilege of dispensing the elements is confined to no particular man, or order of men."—*p.* 158.

We entirely accord with the spirit of freedom which these passages breathe ; but from some of the particular views we dissent. The great error of Milton lies in supposing that the primitive church was meant to be a model for all ages. But can we suppose that the church at its birth, when it was poor, persecuted, hemmed in by Judaism and Heathenism, supplied imperfectly with

Hosted by Google

written rules and records, dependent for instruction chiefly on inspired teachers, and composed of converts who had grown up and been steeped in Jewish and Heathen errors, can we imagine, that in these circumstances the church took a form which it ought to retain as sacred and unalterable, in its triumphs, and prosperity, and diffusion, and in ages of greater light and refinement? We know that in the first ages there were no ministers with salaries, or edifices for public worship. Christians met in private houses, and sometimes in the obscurest they could find. On these occasions, the services were not monopolized by an individual, but shared by the fraternity; nor is there a hint in the New Testament that the administration of the Lord's supper and baptism was confined to the minister. But in all this we have no rule for the present day. Indeed it seems to us utterly repugnant to the idea of a universal religion, intended for all ages and nations, and for all the progressive states of society to the end of the world, to suppose that in its infancy it established an order of worship, instruction, and discipline, which was to remain inviolable in all future times. This doctrine of an inflexible form seems to us servile, superstitious, and disparaging to Christianity. Our religion is too spiritual and inward, and cares too little about its exterior, to bind itself in this everlasting chain. The acknowledged indefiniteness of the New Testament, in regard to this subject, is no mean proof of the enlarged and prospective wisdom of its Founder. We believe, that, with the diffusion of liberal views, the question will arise, whether our religion cannot be taught and administered in methods and forms more adapted, than those which now prevail, to its spirit and great design,

Hosted by Google

to the principles of human nature, and to the condition and wants of society. Among the changes which may grow from this discussion, we do not anticipate the adoption of Milton's plan of sentencing ministers to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow; for we think that we see reasons, in the general spread of knowledge, for enlarging their means and opportunities of study and intellectual culture, that they may meet the increasing demand for more enlightened inculcation of Christian truth. At the same time, it seems to us not unlikely, that, in conformity to Milton's suggestion, public instruction, instead of continuing to be a monopoly of ministers, may be extended freely to men of superior intelligence and piety, and that the results of this arrangement may be, the infusion of new life, power, and practical wisdom into religious teaching, and the substitution of a more natural, free, and various eloquence, for the technical and monotonous mode of treating subjects, which clings so often and so obstinately to the performances of the pulpit.—Again, we do not expect, among the changes of forms and outward worship, that Christians, to meet our author's views, will shut their churches and meet in private houses; for large religious edifices, and large congregations, seem to us among the important means of collecting, and interesting in Christianity, the mass of the community. But perhaps narrower associations for religious improvement may be formed, in which the formalities of public worship will be relaxed, and Christians may reap the benefits of the more familiar and confidental meetings of the primitive converts. It is indeed a great question, how the public administration of Christianity, including modes of discipline, instruction, and worship, may be rendered more

Hosted by Google

impressive and effectual. This field is almost untrodden; but, if we read aright the signs of the times, the day for exploring it draws nigh.

We have said, that, whilst we dissent from some of Milton's views on the subject of our present remarks, we agree in their spirit. It was evidently the aim of all his suggestions, to strip the clergy, as they are called, of that peculiar, artificial sanctity, with which superstition had long arrayed them, and which had made their simple, benignant office, one of the worst instruments of ambition and despotism. We believe, that this institution will never exert its true and full power on the church and on the world, until the childish awe, with which it has been viewed, shall be exchanged for enlightened esteem, and until men, instead of expecting from it certain mysterious, undefined influences, shall see in it a rational provision for promoting virtue and happiness, not by magic, but according to the fixed laws of human nature.

The remainder of the "Treatise on Christian Doctrine" furnishes topics on which we should willingly remark; but we have only time to glance at the opinions in which Milton differs from the majority. He rejects infant baptism, and argues against it with his usual earnestness and strength. He not only affirms, with many other Christians, that the fourth commandment, relating to the Sabbath, is abolished with the rest of the Mosaic system, but maintains, what few have done, that under the gospel no time is appointed for public worship, but that the observance of the first day of the week rests wholly on expediency, and on the agreement of Christians. He believes, that Christ is to appear visibly for the judgment of the world, and that

Hosted by Google

he will reign a thousand years on earth, at the end of which period Satan will assail the church with an innumerable confederacy, and be overwhelmed with everlasting ruin. He speaks of the judgment as beginning with Christ's second advent, and as comprehending his whole government through the millennium, as well as the closing scene, when sentence will be pronounced on evil angels, and on the whole human race. We have now given, we believe, all the peculiarities of Milton's faith. As for that large part of his work, in which he has accumulated scriptural proofs of doctrines and duties in which all Christians are agreed, its general tenor may be understood without farther remarks.

It may now be asked, What is the value of this book? We prize it chiefly as a testimony to Milton's profound reverence for the Christian religion, and an assertion of the freedom and rights of the mind. We are obliged to say, that the work throws little new light on the great subjects of which it treats. Some will say, that this ought not to surprise us; for new light is not to be looked for in the department of theology. But, if this be true, our religion may be charged with the want of adaptation to our nature in an essential point; for one of the most striking features of the human mind is its thirst for constantly enlarging knowledge, and its proneness to lose its interest in subjects which it has exhausted. The chief cause of Milton's failure was, that he sought truth too exclusively in the past, and among the dead. He indeed called no man master, and disclaimed the authority of Fathers, and was evidently dissatisfied with all the sects which had preceded or were spread around him. Still he believed in the perfection of the primitive church, and that Christian-

Hosted by Google

ty, instead of being carried forward, was to be carried *back* to its original purity. To use his own striking language, "the lovely form of Truth," which Christians at first embraced, "had been hewn into a thousand pieces, like the mangled body of Osiris, and scattered to the four winds;" and consequently he believed, that the great duty of her friends was, "to gather up limb by limb, and bring together every joint and member." In conformity with this doctrine, he acted too much as an eclectic theologian, culling something from almost every sect, and endeavouring to form an harmonious system from materials "gathered from the four winds." He would have done better, had he sought truth less in other minds, and more in the communion of his own soul with Scripture, nature, God, and itself. The fact is, that the church, from its beginning, had been imperfect in knowledge and practice, and our business is, not to rest in the past, but to use it as a means of a purer and brighter futurity. Christianity began to be corrupted at its birth, to be debased by earthly mixtures, as soon as it touched the earth. The seeds of that corruption, which grew and shot up into the overshadowing despotism of Papal Rome, were sown in the age of the Apostles, as we learn in the Epistles; and we infer from the condition of the world, that nothing but a stupendous moral miracle, subverting all the laws of the human mind, could have prevented their developement. Who, that understands human nature, does not know, that old associations are not broken up in a moment; that, to minds plunged in a midnight of error, truth must gradually open like the dawning day; that old views will mingle with the new; that old ideas, which we wish to banish, will adhere to

Hosted by Google

the old words to which they were formerly attached; and that the sudden and entire eradication of long-rooted errors would be equivalent to the creation of a new intellect? How long did the Apostles, under Christ's immediate tuition, withstand his instructions! Even Peter, after the miraculous illumination of the day of Pentecost, remained ignorant, until the message from Cornelius, of that glorious feature of Christianity, the abolition of the Jewish peculiarity, and the equal participation of the Gentiles with the Jews in the blessings of the Messiah. As soon as Christianity was preached, it was blended with Judaism, which had power to neutralize the authority of Paul in many churches. In like manner, it soon began to be "spoiled" of its simplicity, "by philosophy and science falsely so called," and to be encumbered by Pagan ceremonies. The first Christians were indeed brought into "wonderful light," if their Christian state be compared with the darkness from which they had emerged; but not if compared with the perfection of knowledge to which Christ came to exalt the human race. The earliest Fathers, as we learn from their works, were not receptive of large communications of truth. Their writings abound in puerilities and marks of childish credulity, and betray that indistinctness of vision, which is experienced by men who issue from thick darkness into the light of day. In the ages of barbarism which followed the fall of the Roman empire, Christianity, though it answered wise purposes of Providence, was more and more disfigured and obscured. The Reformation was indeed a glorious era, but glorious for its reduction of Papal and clerical power, and for the partial liberation of the mind, rather than

Hosted by Google

for immediate improvements of men's apprehensions of Christianity. Some of the Reformers invented or brought back as injurious errors as those they overthrew. Luther's consubstantiation differed from the Pope's transubstantiation by a syllable, and that was all the gain; and we may safely say, that transubstantiation was a less monstrous doctrine than the five points of Calvin. How vain, therefore, was Milton's search for "the mangled Osiris," for "the lovely form and immortal features of Truth," in the history of the church!

Let us not be misunderstood, as if we would cut off the present age from the past. We mean not, that Milton should have neglected the labors of his predecessors. He believed justly, that all the periods and generations of the human family are bound together by a sublime connexion, and that the wisdom of each age is chiefly a derivation from all preceding ages, not excepting the most ancient, just as a noble stream, through its whole extent and in its widest overflowings, still holds communication with its infant springs, gushing out perhaps in the depths of distant forests, or on the heights of solitary mountains. We only mean to say, that the stream of religious knowledge is to swell and grow through its whole course, and to receive new contributions from gifted minds in successive generations. We only regret, that Milton did not draw more from the deep and full fountains of his own soul. We wish only to teach, that antiquity was the infancy of our race, and that its acquisitions, instead of being rested in, are to bear us onward to new heights of truth and virtue. We mean not to complain of Milton for not doing more. He rendered to mankind a far greater

Hosted by Google

service than that of a teacher of an improved theology He taught and exemplified that spirit of intellectual freedom, through which all the great conquests of truth are to be achieved, and by which the human mind is to attain to a new consciousness of its sublime faculties, and to invigorate and expand itself for ever.

We here close our remarks on Milton. In offering this tribute, we have aimed at something higher than to express and gratify our admiration of an eminent man. We believe, that an enlightened and exalted mind is a brighter manifestation of God than the outward universe; and we have set forth, as we have been able, the praises of an illustrious servant of the Most High, that, through him, glory may redound to the Father of all spirits, the Fountain of all wisdom and magnanimous virtue. And still more; we believe that the sublime intelligence of Milton was imparted, not for his own sake only, but to awaken kindred virtue and greatness in other souls. Far from regarding him as standing alone and unapproachable, we believe that he is an illustration of what all, who are true to their nature, will become in the progress of their being; and we have held him forth, not to excite an ineffectual admiration, but to stir up our own and others' breasts to an exhilarating pursuit of high and ever-growing attainments in intellect and virtue.

Hosted by Google

REMARKS

ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

1827–28.

The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte by Sir Walter Scott has been anticipated with an eagerness, proportioned to the unrivalled powers of the author, and to the wonderful endowments and fortunes of the hero. That the general expectation has been satisfied, we cannot affirm. But few will deny, that the writer has given us a monument of his great talents. The rapidity with which such a work has been thrown off astonishes us. We think, however, that the author owed to himself, and to the public, a more deliberate execution of this important undertaking. He should either have abandoned it, or have bestowed on it the long and patient labor which it required. The marks of negligence and haste, which are spread through the work, are serious blemishes, and, to more fastidious readers, inexpiable defects. It wants compression and selection throughout. Many passages are encumbered with verbiage. Many thoughts are weakened by useless

Hosted by Google

expansion and worse than useless repetition. Comparisons are accumulated to excess, and, whilst many are exquisite, perhaps as many are trite and unworthy of history. The remarks are generally just, but obvious. We state these defects plainly, that we may express the more freely our admiration of the talents, which have executed so rapidly a work so extensive and various, so rich in information, so fresh and vivid in description, and furnishing such abundant specimens of a free, graceful, and vigorous style.

The work has the great merit of impartiality. It is probably inaccurate in many of its details, but singularly free from prejudice and passion. Not a few, who considered that the author was both a Briton and a friend of the principles and policy of Pitt, were expecting from his pen a discolored delineation of the implacable foe of England and of that great minister. But the rectitude of his mind, and his reverence for historical truth, have effectually preserved him from abusing the great power, conferred on him by his talents, over public opinion. We think, that his laudable fear of wronging the enemy of his country, joined to an admiration of the dazzling qualities of Napoleon, has led him to soften unduly the crimes of his hero, and to give more favorable impressions than truth will warrant.

But enough of the author, who needs not our praise, and can suffer little by our censure. Our concern is with his subject. A just estimate of the late Emperor of France seems to us important. That extraordinary man, having operated on the world with unprecedented power during his life, is now influencing it by his character. That character, we apprehend, is not

Hosted by Google

viewed as it should be. The kind of admiration which it inspires, even in free countries, is a bad omen. The greatest crime against society, that of spoiling it of its rights and loading it with chains, still fails to move that deep abhorrence, which is its due; and which, if really felt, would fix on the usurper a brand of indelible infamy. Regarding freedom as the chief interest of human nature, as essential to its intellectual, moral, and religious progress, we look on men, who have signalized themselves by their hostility to it, with an indignation at once stern and sorrowful, which no glare of successful war, and no admiration of the crowd, can induce us to suppress. We mean then to speak freely of Napoleon. But, if we know ourselves, we could on no account utter one unjust reproach. We speak the more freely, because conscious of exemption from every feeling like animosity. We war not with the dead. We would resist only what we deem the pernicious influence of the dead. We would devote ourselves to the cause of freedom and humanity, a cause perpetually betrayed by the admiration lavished on prosperous crime and all-grasping ambition. Our great topic will be the Character of Napoleon; and with this we shall naturally intersperse reflections on the great interests which he perpetually influenced.

We begin with observing, that it is an act of justice to Bonaparte to remember, that he grew up under disastrous influences, in a troubled day, when men's minds were convulsed, old institutions overthrown, old opinions shaken, old restraints snapped asunder; when the authority of religion was spurned, and youth abandoned to unwonted license; when the imagination was made feverish by visions of indistinct good, and the

Hosted by Google

passions swelled, by the sympathy of millions, to a resistless torrent. A more dangerous school for the character cannot well be conceived. That all-seeing Being, who knows the trials of his creatures and the secrets of the heart, can alone judge to what degree crimes are extenuated by circumstances so inauspicious. This we must remember in reviewing the history of men, who were exposed to trials unknown to ourselves. But, because the turpitude of an evil agent is diminished by infelicities of education or condition, we must not therefore confound the immutable distinctions of right and wrong, and withhold our reprobation from atrocities which have spread misery and slavery far and wide.

It is also due to Napoleon to observe, that there has always existed, and still exists, a mournful obtuseness of moral feeling in regard to the crimes of military and political life. The wrong-doing of public men on a large scale has never drawn upon them that sincere, hearty abhorrence, which visits private vice. Nations have seemed to court aggression and bondage, by their stupid, insane admiration of successful tyrants. The wrongs, from which men have suffered most, in body and mind, are yet unpunished. True; Christianity has put into our lips censures on the aspiring and the usurping. But these reproaches are as yet little more than sounds, and unmeaning commonplaces. They are repeated for form's sake. When we read or hear them, we feel that they want depth and strength. They are not inward, solemn, burning convictions, breaking from the indignant soul with a tone of reality, before which guilt would cower. The true moral feeling in regard to the crimes of public men is almost to be created.

Hosted by Google

We believe, then, that such a character as Bonaparte's is formed with very little consciousness of its turpitude; and society, which contributes so much to its growth, is responsible for its existence, and merits in part the misery which it spreads.

Of the early influences, under which Bonaparte was formed, we know little. He was educated in a military school, and this, we apprehend, is not an institution to form much delicacy, or independence of moral feeling; for the young soldier is taught, as his first duty, to obey his superior without consulting his conscience; to take human life at another's bidding; to perform that deed, which above all others requires deliberate conviction, without a moment's inquiry as to its justice; and to place himself a passive instrument in hands, which, as all history teaches, often reek with blood causelessly shed.

His first political association was with the Jacobins, the most sanguinary of all the factions which raged in France, and whose sway is emphatically called "the reign of terror." The service, which secured his command in Italy, was the turning of his artillery on the people, who, however dangerous when acting as a mob, happened in the present case to understand their rights, and were directing their violence against manifest usurpation.

His first campaign was in Italy, and we have still a vivid recollection of the almost rapturous admiration, with which we followed his first triumphs; for then we were simple enough to regard him as the chosen guardian of liberty. His peculiar tactics were not then understood; the secret of his success had not reached us

Hosted by Google

and his rapid victories stimulated the imagination to invest him with the mysterious powers of a hero of romance. We confess, that we cannot now read the history of his Italian wars without a quickened movement in the veins. The rapidity of his conceptions; the inexhaustibleness of his invention; the energy of his will; the decision which suffered not a moment's pause between the purpose and its execution; the presence of mind, which, amidst sudden reverses and on the brink of ruin, devised the means of safety and success; these commanding attributes, added to a courage, which, however suspected afterwards, never faltered then, compel us to bestow, what indeed we have no desire to withhold, the admiration which is due to superior power.

Let not the friends of peace be offended. We have said, and we repeat it, that we have no desire to withhold our admiration from the energies, which war often awakens. Great powers, even in their perversion, attest a glorious nature, and we may feel their grandeur, whilst we condemn, with our whole strength of moral feeling, the evil passions by which they are depraved. We are willing to grant that war, abhor it as we may, often developes, and places in strong light, a force of intellect and purpose, which raises our conceptions of the human soul. There is perhaps no moment in life, in which the mind is brought into such intense action, in which the will is so strenuous, and in which irrepressible excitement is so tempered with self-possession, as in the hour of battle. Still the greatness of the warrior is poor and low compared with the magnanimity of virtue. It vanishes before the greatness of principle. The martyr to humanity, to freedom, or religion; the

Hosted by Google

unshrinking adherent of despised and deserted truth, who, alone, unsupported, and scorned, with no crowd to infuse into him courage, no variety of objects to draw his thoughts from himself, no opportunity of effort or resistance to rouse and nourish energy, still yields himself calmly, resolutely, with invincible philanthropy, to bear prolonged and exquisite suffering, which one retracting word might remove, — such a man is as superior to the warrior, as the tranquil and boundless heavens above us, to the low earth we tread beneath our feet.

We have spoken of the energies of mind called forth by war. If we may be allowed a short digression, which however bears directly on our main subject, the merits of Napoleon, we would observe, that military talent, even of the highest order, is far from holding the first place among intellectual endowments. It is one of the lower forms of genius; for it is not conversant with the highest and richest objects of thought. We grant that a mind, which takes in a wide country at a glance, and understands, almost by intuition, the positions it affords for a successful campaign, is a comprehensive and vigorous one. The general, who disposes his forces so as to counteract a greater force; who supplies by skill, science, and invention, the want of numbers; who dives into the counsels of his enemy, and who gives unity, energy, and success to a vast variety of operations, in the midst of casualties and obstructions which no wisdom could foresee, manifests great power. But still the chief work of a general is to apply physical force; to remove physical obstructions; to avail himself of physical aids and advantages; to act on matter; to overcome rivers, ramparts, moun-

Hosted by Google

tains, and human muscles; and these are not the highest objects of mind, nor do they demand intelligence of the highest order; and accordingly nothing is more common than to find men, eminent in this department, who are wanting in the noblest energies of the soul; in habits of profound and liberal thinking, in imagination and taste, in the capacity of enjoying works of genius, and in large and original views of human nature and society. The office of a great general does not differ widely from that of a great mechanician, whose business it is to frame new combinations of physical forces, to adapt them to new circumstances, and to remove new obstructions. Accordingly great generals, away from the camp, are often no greater men than the mechanician taken from his workshop. In conversation they are often dull. Deep and refined reasonings they cannot comprehend. We know that there are splendid exceptions. Such was Cesar, at once the greatest soldier and the most sagacious statesman of his age, whilst, in eloquence and literature, he left behind him almost all, who had devoted themselves exclusively to these pursuits. But such cases are rare. The conqueror of Napoleon, the hero of Waterloo, possesses undoubtedly great military talents; but we do not understand, that his most partial admirers claim for him a place in the highest class of minds. We will not go down for illustration to such men as Nelson, a man great on the deck, but debased by gross vices, and who never pretended to enlargement of intellect. To institute a comparison in point of talent and genius between such men and Milton, Bacon, and Shakspeare, is almost an insult on these illustrious names. Who can think of these truly

Hosted by Google

great intelligences; of the range of their minds through heaven and earth; of their deep intuition into the soul; of their new and glowing combinations of thought; of the energy with which they grasped, and subjected to their main purpose, the infinite materials of illustration which nature and life afford, — who can think of the forms of transcendent beauty and grandeur which they created, or which were rather emanations of their own minds; of the calm wisdom and fervid imagination which they conjoined; of the voice of power, in which "though dead, they still speak," and awaken intellect, sensibility, and genius in both hemispheres, — who can think of such men, and not feel the immense inferiority of the most gifted warrior, whose elements of thought are physical forces and physical obstructions, and whose employment is the combination of the lowest class of objects, on which a powerful mind can be employed.

We return to Napoleon. His splendid victories in Italy spread his name like lightning through the civilized world. Unhappily they emboldened him to those unprincipled and open aggressions, to the indulgence of that lawless, imperious spirit, which marked his future course, and kept pace with his growing power. In his victorious career, he soon came in contact with states, some of which, as Tuscany and Venice, had acknowledged the French Republic, whilst others, as Parma and Modena, had observed a strict neutrality. The old-fashioned laws of nations, under which such states would have found shelter, seemed never to have crossed the mind of the young victor. Not satisfied with violating the neutrality of all, he seized the port of Leghorn, and ruined the once flourishing commerce

Hosted by Google

of Tuscany; and, having exacted heavy tribute from Parma and Modena, he compelled these powers to surrender, what had hitherto been held sacred in the utmost extremities of war, some of their choicest pictures, the chief ornaments of their capitals. We are sometimes told of the good done by Napoleon to Italy. But we have heard his name pronounced as indignantly there as here. An Italian cannot forgive him for robbing that country of its noblest works of art, its dearest treasures and glories, which had made it a land of pilgrimage to men of taste and genius from the whole civilized world, and which had upheld and solaced its pride under conquest and humiliation. From this use of power in the very dawn of his fortunes, it might easily have been foretold, what part he would act in the stormy day which was approaching, when the sceptre of France and Europe was to be offered to any strong hand, which should be daring enough to grasp it.

Next to Italy, Egypt became the stage for the display of Napoleon; Egypt, a province of the Grand Signior, with whom France was in profound peace, and who, according to the long established relations of Europe, was her natural ally. It would seem that this expedition was Bonaparte's own project. His motives are not very distinctly stated by his biographer. We doubt not that his great aim was conspicuousness. He chose a theatre where all eyes could be turned upon him. He saw that the time for usurpation had not yet come in France. To use his own language, "the fruit was not yet ripe." He wanted a field of action which would draw upon him the gaze of the world, and from which he might return at the favorable moment for the

Hosted by Google

prosecution of his enterprises at home. At the same time he undoubtedly admitted into his mind, which success had already intoxicated, some vague, wild hope of making an impression on the Eastern world, which might place its destinies at his command, and give him a throne more enviable than Europe could bestow. His course in the East exhibited the same lawlessness, the same contempt of all restraints on his power, which we have already noted. No means, which promised success, were thought the worse for their guilt. It was not enough for him to boast of his triumphs over the cross, or to profess Mahometanism. He claimed inspiration, and a commission from God, and was anxious to join the character of prophet to that of hero. This was the beginning of the great weaknesses and errors into which he was betrayed by that spirit of self-exaggeration, which, under the influence of past success and of unbounded flattery, was already growing into a kind of insanity. In his own view he was fit to be a compeer with Mahomet. His greatness in his own eyes made him blind to the folly of urging his supernatural claims on the Turk, who contemned, even more than he abhorred, a Frank; and who would sooner have sold himself a slave to Christians, than have acknowledged a renegade Christian as a sharer of the glories of Mahomet. It was not enough for Bonaparte, on this expedition, to insult God, to show an impiety as foolish as it was daring. He proceeded to trample on the sentiments and dictates of humanity with equal hardihood. The massacre of Jaffa is universally known. Twelve hundred prisoners, and probably more, who had surrendered themselves to Napoleon, and were apparently admitted to quarter, were two days afterwards

Hosted by Google

marched out of the fort, divided into small bodies, and then deliberately shot, and, in case the musket was not effectual, were despatched by bayonets. This was an outrage, which cannot be sheltered by the laws and usages of war, barbarous as they are. It was the deed of a bandit and savage, and ought to be execrated by good men, who value and would preserve the mitigations which Christianity has infused into the conduct of national hostilities.

The next great event in Bonaparte's history was the usurpation of the supreme power of the state, and the establishment of military despotism over France. On the particulars of this criminal act we have no desire to enlarge, nor are we anxious to ascertain, whether our hero, on this occasion, lost his courage and self-possession, as he is reported to have done. We are more anxious to express our convictions of the turpitude of this outrage on liberty and justice. For this crime but one apology can be offered. Napoleon, it is said, seized the reins, when, had he let them slip, they would have fallen into other hands. He enslaved France at a moment, when, had he spared her, she would have found another tyrant. Admitting the truth of the plea, what is it but the reasoning of the highwayman, who robs and murders the traveller, because the booty was about to be seized by another hand, or because another dagger was ready to do the bloody deed? We are aware that the indignation, with which we regard this crime of Napoleon, will find a response in few breasts; for to the multitude a throne is a temptation which no virtue can be expected to withstand. But moral truth is immovable amidst the sophistry, ridicule, and abject reasonings of men, and the time

Hosted by Google

will come, when it will find a meet voice to give it utterance. Of all crimes against society, usurpation is the blackest. He who lifts a parricidal hand against his country's rights and freedom; who plants his foot on the necks of thirty millions of his fellow-creatures; who concentrates in his single hand the powers of a mighty empire; and who wields its powers, squanders its treasures, and pours forth its blood like water, to make other nations slaves and the world his prey,—this man, as he unites all crimes in his sanguinary career, so he should be set apart by the human race for their unmingled and unmeasured abhorrence, and should bear on his guilty head a mark as opprobrious as that which the first murderer wore. We cannot think with patience of one man fastening chains on a whole people, and subjecting millions to his single will; of whole regions overshadowed by the tyranny of a frail being like ourselves. In anguish of spirit we exclaim, How long will an abject world kiss the foot which tramples it? How long shall crime find shelter in its very aggravations and excess?

Perhaps it may be said, that our indignation seems to light on Napoleon, not so much because he was a despot, as because he became a despot by usurpation; that we seem not to hate tyranny itself, so much as a particular mode of gaining it. We do indeed regard usurpation as a crime of peculiar blackness, especially when committed, as in the case of Napoleon, in the name of liberty. All despotism, however, whether usurped or hereditary, is our abhorrence. We regard it as the most grievous wrong and insult to the human race. But towards the hereditary despot we have more of compassion than indignation. Nursed and

Hosted by Google

brought up in delusion, worshipped from his cradle, never spoken to in the tone of fearless truth, taught to look on the great mass of his fellow-beings as an inferior race, and to regard despotism as a law of nature and a necessary element of social life; such a prince, whose education and condition almost deny him the possibility of acquiring healthy moral feeling and manly virtue, must not be judged severely. Still, in absolving the despot from much of the guilt which seems at first to attach to his unlawful and abused power, we do not the less account despotism a wrong and a curse. The time for its fall, we trust, is coming. It cannot fall too soon. It has long enough wrung from the laborer his hard earnings; long enough squandered a nation's wealth on its parasites and minions; long enough warred against the freedom of the mind, and arrested the progress of truth. It has filled dungeons enough with the brave and good, and shed enough of the blood of patriots. Let its end come. It cannot come too soon.

We have now followed Bonaparte to the moment of possessing himself of the supreme power. Those who were associated with him in subverting the government of the Directory, essayed to lay restraints on the First Consul, who was to take their place. But he indignantly repelled them. He held the sword, and, with this, not only intimidated the selfish, but awed and silenced the patriotic, who saw too plainly, that it could only be wrested from him by renewing the horrors of the Revolution. — We now proceed to consider some of the means, by which he consolidated his power, and raised it into the imperial dignity. We consider these as much more important illustrations of his character

Hosted by Google

than his successive campaigns, to which accordingly we shall give little attention.

One of his first measures for giving stability to his power was certainly a wise one, and was obviously dictated by his situation and character. Having seized the first dignity in the state by military force, and leaning on a devoted soldiery, he was under no necessity of binding himself to any of the parties which had distracted the country, a vassalage to which his domineering spirit could ill have stooped. Policy and his love of mastery pointed out to him an indiscriminate employment of the leading men of all parties ; and not a few of these had become so selfish and desperate in the disastrous progress of the Revolution, that they were ready to break up old connexions, and to divide the spoils of the Republic with a master. Accordingly he adopted a system of comprehension and lenity, from which even the emigrants were not excluded, and had the satisfaction of seeing almost the whole talent, which the Revolution had quickened, leagued in the execution of his plans. Under the able men, whom he called to his aid, the finances and the war department, which had fallen into a confusion that threatened ruin to the State, were soon restored to order, and means and forces provided for retrieving the recent defeats and disgraces of the French armies.

This leads us to mention another and most important and effectual means by which Napoleon secured and enlarged his power. We refer to the brilliant campaign immediately following his elevation to the Consulate, and which restored to France the ascendency which she had lost during his absence. On his success at this juncture his future fortunes wholly de-

Hosted by Google

pended. It was in this campaign that he proved himself the worthy rival of Hannibal. The energy which conducted an army, with its cavalry, artillery, and supplies, across the Alps, by untried paths, which only the chamois hunter, born and bred amidst glaciers and everlasting snows, had trodden, gave the impression, which of all others he most desired to spread, of his superiority to nature, as well as to human opposition. This enterprise was in one view a fearful omen to Europe. It showed a power over the minds of his soldiers, the effects of which were not to be calculated. The conquest of St. Bernard by a French army was the boast of the nation; but a still more wonderful thing was, the capacity of the general to inspire into that army the intense force, confidence, resolution, and patience, by which alone the work could be accomplished. The victory of Marengo, gained by one of the accidents of war in the moment of apparent defeat and ruin, secured to Bonaparte the dominion which he coveted. France, who, in her madness and folly, had placed her happiness in conquest, now felt that the glory of her arms was safe only in the hands of the First Consul; whilst the soldiery, who held the sceptre in their gift, became more thoroughly satisfied, that triumph and spoils waited on his standard.

Another important and essential means of securing and building up his power, was the system of *espionage*, called the Police, which, under the Directory, had received a developement worthy of those friends of freedom, but which was destined to be perfected by the wisdom of Napoleon. It would seem as if despotism, profiting by the experience of ages, had put forth her whole skill and resources in forming the French po-

Hosted by Google

lice, and had framed an engine, never to be surpassed, for stifling the faintest breathings of disaffection, and chaining every free thought. This system of *espionage*, (we are proud that we have no English word for the infernal machine,) had indeed been used under all tyrannies. But it wanted the craft of Fouché, and the energy of Bonaparte, to disclose all its powers. In the language of our author, "it spread through all the ramifications of society;" that is, every man, of the least importance in the community, had the eye of a spy upon him. He was watched at home as well as abroad, in the *boudoir* and theatre, in the brothel and gaming-house; and these last-named haunts furnished not a few ministers of the Argus-eyed Police. There was an ear open through all France to catch the whispers of discontent; a power of evil, which aimed to rival, in omnipresence and invisibleness, the benignant agency of the Deity. Of all instruments of tyranny, this is the most detestable. It chills social intercourse; locks up the heart; infects and darkens men's minds with mutual jealousies and fears; and reduces to system a wary dissimulation, subversive of force and manliness of character. We find, however, some consolation in learning that tyrants are the prey of distrust, as well as the people over whom they set this cruel guard; that tyrants cannot confide in their own spies, but must keep watch over the machinery which we have described, lest it recoil upon themselves. Bonaparte at the head of an army is a dazzling spectacle; but Bonaparte, heading a horde of spies, compelled to doubt and fear these base instruments of his power, compelled to divide them into bands, and to receive daily reports from each, so that, by balancing them against each other and sifting

Hosted by Google

their testimony, he might gather the truth; Bonaparte, thus employed, is any thing but imposing. It requires no great elevation of thought to look down on such an occupation with scorn; and we see, in the anxiety and degradation which it involves, the beginning of that retribution which tyranny cannot escape.

Another means by which the First Consul protected his power can excite no wonder. That he should fetter the press, should banish or imprison refractory editors, should subject the journals and more important works of literature to jealous superintendence, these were things of course. Free writing and despotism are such implacable foes, that we hardly think of blaming a tyrant for keeping no terms with the press. He cannot do it. He might as reasonably choose a volcano for the foundation of his throne. Necessity is laid upon him, unless he is in love with ruin, to check the bold and honest expression of thought. But the necessity is his own choice; and let infamy be that man's portion, who seizes a power which he cannot sustain, but by dooming the mind through a vast empire to slavery, and by turning the press, that great organ of truth, into an instrument of public delusion and debasement.

We pass to another means of removing obstructions to his power and ambition, still worse than the last. We refer to the terror which he spread by his severities, just before assuming the imperial power. The murder of the Duke d'Enghien was justified by Napoleon as a method of striking fear into the Bourbons, who, as he said, were plotting his death. This may have been one motive; for we have reason to think that he was about that time threatened with assassination. But we believe still more, that he intended to awe into acqui-

Hosted by Google

escence the opposition, which, he knew, would be awakened in many breasts, by the prostration of the forms of the republic, and the open assumption of the imperial dignity. There were times when Bonaparte disclaimed the origination of the murder of the Duke d'Enghien. But no other could have originated it. It bears internal marks of its author. The boldness, decision, and overpowering rapidity of the crime, point unerringly to the soul where it was conceived. We believe that one great recommendation of this murder was, that it would strike amazement and terror into France and Europe, and show that he was prepared to shed any blood, and to sweep before him every obstruction, in his way to absolute power. Certain it is, that the open murder of the Duke d'Enghien, and the justly suspected assassinations of Pichegru and Wright, did create a dread, such as had not been felt before ; and, whilst on previous occasions some faint breathings of liberty were to be heard in the legislative bodies, only one voice, that of Carnot, was raised against investing Bonaparte with the imperial crown, and laying France, an unprotected victim, at his feet.

There remain for our consideration other means employed by Bonaparte for building up and establishing his power, of a different character from those we have named, and which on this account we cannot pass without notice. One of these was the Concordat which he extorted from the Pope, and which professed to reëstablish the Catholic religion in France. Our religious prejudices have no influence on our judgment of this measure. We make no objections to it, as the restoration of a worship which on many accounts we condemn We view it now simply as an instrument of

Hosted by Google

policy, and, in this light, it seems to us no proof of the sagacity of Bonaparte. It helps to confirm in us an impression, which other parts of his history give us, that he did not understand the peculiar character of his age, and the peculiar and original policy which it demanded. He always used commonplace means of power, although the unprecedented times in which he lived, required a system, which should combine untried resources, and touch new springs of action. Because old governments had found a convenient prop in religion, Napoleon imagined that it was a necessary appendage and support of his sway, and resolved to restore it. But at this moment there were no foundations in France for a religious establishment, which could give strength and a character of sacredness to the supreme power. There was comparatively no faith, no devout feeling, and still more, no superstition to supply the place of these. The time for the reaction of the religious principle had not yet arrived; and a more likely means of retarding it could hardly have been devised, than the nursing care extended to the church by Bonaparte, the recent Mussulman, the known despiser of the ancient faith, who had no worship at heart but the worship of himself. Instead of bringing religion to the aid of the state, it was impossible that such a man should touch it, without loosening the faint hold which it yet retained on the people. There were none so ignorant as to be the dupes of the First Consul in this particular. Every man, woman, and child knew that he was playing the part of a juggler. Not one religious association could be formed with his character or government. It was a striking proof of the self-exaggerating vanity of Bonaparte, and of his ignorance of the

Hosted by Google

higher principles of human nature, that he not only hoped to revive and turn to his account the old religion, but imagined, that he could, if necessary, have created a new one. "Had the Pope never existed before, he should have been made for the occasion," was the speech of this political charlatan; as if religious opinion and feeling were things to be manufactured by a consular decree. Ancient legislators, by adopting and sympathizing with popular and rooted superstitions, were able to press them into the service of their institutions. They were wise enough to build on a pre-existing faith, and studiously to conform to it. Bonaparte, in a country of infidelity and atheism, and whilst unable to refrain from sarcasms on the system which he patronized, was weak enough to believe that he might make it a substantial support of his government. He undoubtedly congratulated himself on the terms, which he exacted from the Pope, and which had never been conceded to the most powerful monarchs; forgetting that his apparent success was the defeat of his plans; for, just as far as he severed the church from the supreme pontiff, and placed himself conspicuously at its head, he destroyed the only connexion which could give it influence. Just so far its power over opinion and conscience ceased. It became a coarse instrument of state, contemned by the people, and serving only to demonstrate the aspiring views of its master. Accordingly the French bishops in general refused to hold their dignities under this new head, preferred exile to the sacrifice of the rights of the church, and left behind them a hearty abhorrence of the Concordat among the more zealous members of their communion. Happy would it have been for Napoleon, had he left

Hosted by Google

the Pope and the church to themselves. By occasionally recognising and employing, and then insulting and degrading, the Roman pontiff, he exasperated a large part of Christendom, fastened on himself the brand of impiety, and awakened a religious hatred which contributed its full measure to his fall.

As another means employed by Bonaparte for giving strength and honor to his government, we may name the grandeur of his public works, which he began in his consulate and continued after his accession to the imperial dignity. These dazzled France, and still impress travellers with admiration. Could we separate these from his history, and did no other indication of his character survive, we should undoubtedly honor him with the title of a beneficent sovereign; but, connected as they are, they do little or nothing to change our conceptions of him as an all-grasping, unprincipled usurper. Paris was the chief object of these labors; and surely we cannot wonder, that he who aimed at universal dominion, should strive to improve and adorn the metropolis of his empire. It is the practice of despots to be lavish of expense on the royal residence and the seat of government. Travellers in France, as in other countries of the continent, are struck and pained by the contrast between the magnificent capital and the mud-walled village and uninteresting province. Bonaparte had a special motive for decorating Paris, for "Paris is France," as has often been observed; and, in conciliating the vanity of the great city, he secured the obedience of the whole country. The boasted internal improvements of Napoleon scarcely deserve to be named, if we compare their influence with the operation of his public measures. The con-

Hosted by Google

scription, which drew from agriculture its most effective laborers, and his continental system, which sealed up every port and annihilated the commerce of his empire, drained and exhausted France to a degree, for which his artificial stimulants of industry, and his splendid projects, afforded no compensation. Perhaps the most admired of all his public works is the road over the Simplon, to which all travellers concur in giving the epithet, stupendous. But it ought not to amaze us, that he, who was aspiring at unlimited dominion, should establish communications between the different provinces of his empire. It ought not to amaze us, that he, who had scaled the glaciers of St. Bernard, should covet some easier passage for pouring his troops into Italy; nor is it very wonderful, that a sovereign, who commanded the revenues of Europe, and who lived in an age when civil engineering had been advanced to a perfection before unknown, should accomplish a bolder enterprise than his predecessors. We would add, that Napoleon must divide with Fabbroni the glory of the road over the Simplon; for the genius, which contrived and constructed, is more properly its author, than the will which commanded it.

There is however one great work, which gives Bonaparte a fair claim on the gratitude of posterity and entitles him to an honorable renown. We refer to the new code of laws, which was given to France under his auspices. His participation in this work has indeed been unwarrantably and ridiculously magnified. Because he attended the meetings of the commissioners to whom it was assigned, and made some useful and sagacious suggestions, he has been praised, as if he had struck out, by the miraculous force of his genius,

Hosted by Google

a new code of laws. The truth is, that he employed for this work, as he should have done, the most eminent civilians of the empire; and it is also true, that these learned men have little claim to originality; for, as our author observes, the code "has few peculiarities making a difference between its principles and those of the Roman law." In other words, they preferred wisdom to novelty. Still Bonaparte deserves great praise for his interest in the work, for the impulse he gave to those to whom it was committed, and for the time and thought, which, amidst the cares of a vast empire, he bestowed upon it. That his ambition incited him to this labor, we doubt not. He meant to entwine the laurels of Justinian with those of Alexander. But we will not quarrel with ambition, when it is wise enough to devote itself to the happiness of mankind. In the present case, he showed that he understood something of true glory; and we prize the instance more, because it stands almost alone in his history. We look on the conqueror, the usurper, the spoiler of kingdoms, the insatiable despot, with disgust, and see in all these characters an essential vulgarness of mind. But, when we regard him as a Fountain of Justice to a vast empire, we recognise in him a resemblance to the just and benignant Deity, and cheerfully accord to him the praise of bestowing on a nation one of the greatest gifts, which it is permitted to man to confer. It was however the misery of Bonaparte, a curse brought on him by his crimes, that he could touch nothing without leaving on it the polluting mark of despotism. His usurpation took from him the power of legislating with magnanimity, where his own interest was concerned. He could provide for the administra-

Hosted by Google

tion of justice between man and man, but not between the citizen and the ruler. Political offences, the very class which ought to be submitted to a jury, were denied that mode of trial. Juries might decide on other criminal questions; but they were not to be permitted to interpose between the despot and the ill-fated subjects, who might fall under his suspicion. These were arraigned before "special tribunals, invested with a half military character," the ready ministers of nefarious prosecutions, and only intended to cloak by legal forms the murderous purpose of the tyrant.

We have thus considered some of the means by which Bonaparte consolidated and extended his power. We now see him advanced to that imperial throne, on which he had long fixed his eager eye. We see France alternately awed and dazzled by the influences we have described, and at last surrendering, by public, deliberate acts, without a struggle or a show of opposition, her rights, liberties, interests, and power to an absolute master and to his posterity for ever. Thus perished the name and forms of the Republic. Thus perished the hopes of philanthropy. The air, which a few years ago resounded with the shouts of a great people casting away their chains, and claiming their birthright of freedom, now rung with the servile cries of long life to a blood-stained usurper. There were indeed generous spirits, true patriots, like our own La Fayette, still left in France. But, few and scattered, they were left to shed in secret the tears of sorrowful and indignant despair. By this base and disastrous issue of their revolution, the French nation not only renounced their own rights, but brought reproach on

Hosted by Google

the cause of freedom, which years cannot wash away. This is to us a more painful recollection, than all the desolations which France spread through Europe, and than her own bitter sufferings, when the hour of retribution came upon her. The fields which she laid waste are again waving with harvest; and the groans which broke forth through her cities and villages, when her bravest sons perished by thousands and ten thousands on the snows of Russia, have died away, and her wasted population is renewed. But the wounds which she inflicted on freedom by the crimes perpetrated in that sacred name, and by the abject spirit with which that sacred cause was deserted, are still fresh and bleeding. France not only subjected herself to a tyrant, but what is worse, she has given tyranny everywhere new pleas and arguments, and emboldened it to preach openly, in the face of heaven, the impious doctrines of absolute power and unconditional submission.

Napoleon was now Emperor of France; and a man unacquainted with human nature would think, that such an empire, whose bounds now extended to the Rhine, might have satisfied even an ambitious man. But Bonaparte obeyed that law of progress, to which the highest minds are peculiarly subjected; and acquisition inflamed, instead of appeasing, the spirit of dominion. He had long proposed to himself the conquest of Europe, of the world; and the title of Emperor added intenseness to this purpose. Did we not fear, that by repetition we might impair the conviction which we are most anxious to impress, we would enlarge on the enormity of the guilt involved in the project of universal empire. Napoleon knew distinctly the price, which he must pay for the eminence which he coveted.

Hosted by Google

He knew that the path to it lay over wounded and slaughtered millions, over putrefying heaps of his fellow-creatures, over ravaged fields, smoking ruins, pillaged cities. He knew that his steps would be followed by the groans of widowed mothers and famished orphans; of bereaved friendship and despairing love; and that, in addition to this amount of misery, he would create an equal amount of crime, by multiplying indefinitely the instruments and participators of his rapine and fraud. He knew the price, and resolved to pay it. But we do not insist on a topic, which few, very few as yet, understand or feel. Turning then for the present from the moral aspect of this enterprise, we will view it in another light, which is of great importance to a just estimate of his claims on admiration. We will inquire into the nature and fitness of the measures and policy which he adopted, for compassing the subjugation of Europe and the world.

We are aware, that this discussion may expose us to the charge of great presumption. It may be said that men, having no access to the secrets of cabinets, and no participation in public affairs, are not the best judges of the policy of such a man as Napoleon. This we are not anxious to disprove. We do not deny the disadvantages of our position, nor shall we quarrel with our readers for questioning the soundness of our opinions. But we will say, that though distant, we have not been indifferent observers of the great events of our age, and that, though conscious of exposure to many errors, we have a strong persuasion of the substantial correctness of our views. We express then, without reserve, our belief, that the policy of Napoleon was wanting in sagacity, and that he proved himself incapable, as we

Hosted by Google

before suggested, of understanding the character and answering the demands of his age. His system was a repetition of old means, when the state of the world was new. The sword and the police, which had sufficed him for enslaving France, were not the only powers required for his designs against the human race. Other resources were to be discovered or created; and the genius for calling them forth did not, we conceive, belong to Napoleon.

The circumstances, under which Napoleon aspired to universal empire, differed in many respects from those, under which former conquerors were placed. It was easy for Rome, when she had subdued kingdoms, to reduce them to provinces and to govern them by force; for nations at that period were bound together by no tie. They had little communication with each other. Differences of origin, of religion, of manners, of language, of modes of warfare; differences aggravated by long and ferocious wars, and by the general want of civilization, prevented joint action, and almost all concern for one another's fate. Modern Europe, on the other hand, was an assemblage of civilized states, closely connected by commerce, by literature, by a common faith, by interchange of thoughts and improvements, and by a policy which had for ages proposed, as its chief object, the establishment of such a balance of power as would secure national independence. Under these influences the human mind had made great progress; and in truth the French revolution had resulted from an unprecedented excitement and developement of men's faculties, and from the extension of power and intelligence through a vastly wider class, than had participated in them at any former period. The very

Hosted by Google

power, which Napoleon was wielding, might be traced to an enthusiasm essentially generous, and manifesting a tendency of the civilized world to better institutions. It is plain, that the old plans of conquest, and the maxims of comparatively barbarous ages, did not suit such a state of society. An ambitious man was to make his way, by allying himself with the new movements and excitements of the world. The existence of a vast maritime power like England, which, by its command of the ocean and its extensive commerce, was brought into contact with every community, and which at the same time enjoyed the enviable preëminence of possessing the freest institutions in Europe, was of itself a sufficient motive for a great modification of the policy, by which one state was now to be placed at the head of the nations. The peculiar character and influence of England, Bonaparte seemed indeed never able to comprehend; and the violent measures, by which he essayed to tear asunder the old connexions of that country with the continent, only gave them strength, by adding to the ties of interest those of sympathy, of common suffering, and common danger.

Force and corruption were the great engines of Napoleon, and he plied them without disguise or reserve, not caring how far he insulted, and armed against himself, the moral and national feelings of Europe. His great reliance was on the military spirit and energy of the French people. To make France a nation of soldiers was the first and main instrument of his policy; and here he was successful. The revolution indeed had in no small degree done this work to his hands. To complete it, he introduced a national system of education, having for its plain end to train the whole

Hosted by Google

youth of France to a military life, to familiarize the mind to this destination from its earliest years, and to associate the idea of glory almost exclusively with arms. The conscription gave full efficacy to this system; for, as every young man in the empire had reason to anticipate a summons to the army, the first object in education naturally was, to fit him for the field. The public honors bestowed on military talent, and a rigorous impartiality in awarding promotion to merit, so that no origin, however obscure, was a bar to what were deemed the highest honors of Europe, kindled the ambition of the whole people into a flame, and directed it exclusively to the camp. It is true, the conscription, which thinned so terribly the ranks of her youth, and spread anxiety and bereavement through all her dwellings, was severely felt in France. But Napoleon knew the race whom it was his business to manage; and by the glare of victory, and the title of the Grand Empire, he succeeded in reconciling them for a time to the most painful domestic privations, and to an unexampled waste of life. Thus he secured, what he accounted the most important instrument of dominion, a great military force. But, on the other hand, the stimulants, which, for this purpose, he was forced to apply perpetually to French vanity, the ostentation with which the invincible power of France was trumpeted to the world, and the haughty, vaunting style which became the most striking characteristic of that intoxicated people, were perpetual irritations of the national spirit and pride of Europe, and implanted a deep hatred towards the new and insulting empire, which waited but for a favorable moment to repay with interest the debt of humiliation.

Hosted by Google

The condition of Europe forbade, as we believe, the establishment of universal monarchy by mere physical force. The sword, however important, was now to play but a secondary part. The true course for Napoleon seems to us to have been indicated, not only by the state of Europe, but by the means which France in the beginning of her revolution had found most effectual. He should have identified himself with some great interests, opinion, or institutions, by which he might have bound to himself a large party in every nation. He should have contrived to make at least a specious cause against all old establishments. To contrast himself most strikingly and most advantageously with former governments, should have been the key of his policy. He should have placed himself at the head of a new order of things, which should have worn the face of an improvement of the social state. Nor did the subversion of republican forms prevent his adoption of this course, or of some other which would have secured to him the sympathy of multitudes. He might still have drawn some broad lines between his own administration and that of other states, tending to throw the old dynasties into the shade. He might have cast away the ancient pageantry and forms, distinguished himself by the simplicity of his establishments, and exaggerated the relief which he gave to his people, by saving them the burdens of a wasteful and luxurious court. He might have insisted on the great benefits that had accrued to France from the establishment of uniform laws, which protected alike all classes of men; and he might have virtually pledged himself to the subversion of the feudal inequalities which still disfigure Europe. He might have insisted on the favorable changes to be

Hosted by Google

introduced into property, by abolishing the entails which fettered it, the rights of primogeniture, and the exclusive privileges of a haughty aristocracy. He might have found abuses enough against which to array himself as a champion. By becoming the head of new institutions, which would have involved the transfer of power into new hands, and would have offered to the people a real improvement, he might everywhere have summoned to his standard the bold and enterprising, and might have disarmed the national prejudices to which he fell a prey. Revolution was still the true instrument of power. In a word, Napoleon lived at a period, when he could only establish a durable and universal control through principles and institutions of some kind or other, to which he would seem to be devoted.

It was impossible, however, for such a man as Napoleon, to adopt, perhaps to conceive, a system such as has now been traced; for it was wholly at war with that egotistical, self-relying, self-exaggerating principle, which was the most striking feature of his mind. He imagined himself able, not only to conquer nations, but to hold them together by the awe and admiration which his own character would inspire; and this bond he preferred to every other. An indirect sway, a control of nations by means of institutions, principles, or prejudices, of which he was to be only the apostle and defender, was utterly inconsistent with that vehemence of will, that passion for astonishing mankind, and that persuasion of his own invincibleness, which were his master feelings, and which made force his darling instrument of dominion. He chose to be the great, palpable, and sole bond of his empire; to have his image

Hosted by Google

reflected from every establishment; to be the centre, in which every ray of glory should meet, and from which every impulse should be propagated. In consequence of this egotism, he never dreamed of adapting himself to the moral condition of the world. The sword was his chosen weapon, and he used it without disguise. He insulted nations as well as sovereigns. He did not attempt to gild their chains, or to fit the yoke gently to their necks. The excess of his extortions, the audacity of his claims, and the insolent language in which Europe was spoken of as the vassal of the great empire, discovered, that he expected to reign, not only without linking himself with the interests, prejudices, and national feelings of men, but by setting all at defiance.

It would be easy to point out a multitude of instances in which he sacrificed the only policy by which he could prevail, to the persuasion, that his own greatness could more than balance whatever opposition his violence might awaken. In an age in which Christianity was exerting some power, there was certainly a degree of deference due to the moral convictions of society. But Napoleon thought himself more than a match for the moral instincts and sentiments of our nature. He thought himself able to cover the most atrocious deeds by the splendor of his name, and even to extort applause for crimes by the brilliancy of his success. He took no pains to conciliate esteem. In his own eyes he was mightier than conscience; and thus he turned against himself the power and resentment of virtue, in every breast where that divine principle yet found a home.

Through the same blinding egotism, he was anxious

Hosted by Google

to fill the thrones of Europe with men bearing his own name, and to multiply everywhere images of himself. Instead of placing over conquered countries efficient men, taken from themselves, who, by upholding better institutions, would carry with them large masses of the people, and who would still, by their hostility to the old dynasties, link their fortunes with his own, he placed over nations such men as Jerome and Murat. He thus spread a jealousy of his power, whilst he rendered it insecure; for as none of the princes of his creation, however well disposed, were allowed to identify themselves with their subjects, and to take root in the public heart, but were compelled to act, openly and without disguise, as satellites and prefects of the French emperor; they gained no hold on their subjects, and could bring no strength to their master in his hour of peril. In none of his arrangements did Napoleon think of securing to his cause the attachment of nations. Astonishment, awe, and force were his weapons, and his own great name the chosen pillar of his throne.

So far was Bonaparte from magnifying the contrast and distinctions between himself and the old dynasties of Europe, and from attaching men to himself by new principles and institutions, that he had the great weakness, for so we view it, to revive the old forms of monarchy, and to ape the manners of the old court, and thus to connect himself with the herd of legitimate sovereigns. This was not only to rob his government of that imposing character which might have been given to it, and of that interest which it might have inspired as an improvement on former institutions, but was to become competitor in a race in which he could not but be distanced. He could indeed pluck crowns from the

Hosted by Google

heads of monarchs; but he could not by any means infuse their blood into his veins, associate with himself the ideas which are attached to a long line of ancestry, or give to his court the grace of manners, which belongs to older establishments. His true policy was, to throw contempt on distinctions, which he could not rival; and, had he possessed the genius and spirit of the founder of a new era, he would have substituted for a crown, and for other long worn badges of power, a new and simple style of grandeur, and new insignia of dignity, more consonant with an enlightened age, and worthy of one who disdained to be a vulgar king. By the policy which he adopted, if it be worthy of that name, he became a vulgar king, and showed a mind incapable of answering the wants and demands of his age. It is well known, that the progress of intelligence had done much in Europe, to weaken men's reverence for pageantry and show. Nobles had learned to lay aside their trappings in ordinary life, and to appear as gentlemen. Even royalty had begun to retrench its pomp; and, in the face of all this improvement, Bonaparte stooped from his height, to study costumes, to legislate about court dresses and court manners, and to outshine his brother monarchs in their own line. He desired to add the glory of master of ceremonies to that of conqueror of nations. In his anxiety to belong to the caste of kings, he exacted scrupulously the observance and etiquette with which they are approached. Not satisfied with this approximation to the old sovereigns, with whom he had no common interest, and from whom he could not have removed himself too far, he sought to ally himself by marriage with the royal families in Europe, to ingraft himself and his posterity on an old

Hosted by Google

mperial tree. This was the very way to turn back opinion into its old channels; to carry back Europe to its old prejudices; to facilitate the restoration of its old order; to preach up legitimacy; to crush every hope that he was to work a beneficent change among nations. It may seem strange that his egotism did not preserve him from the imitation of antiquated monarchy. But his egotism, though excessive, was not lofty, nor was it seconded by a genius, rich and inventive, except in war.

We have now followed Napoleon to the height of his power, and given our views of the policy by which he hoped to make that power perpetual and unbounded. His fall is easily explained. It had its origin in that spirit of self-reliance and self-exaggeration, of which we have seen so many proofs. It began in Spain. That country was a province in reality. He wanted to make it one in name; to place over it a Bonaparte; to make it a more striking manifestation of his power. For this purpose, he "kidnapped" its royal family, stirred up the unconquerable spirit of its people, and, after shedding on its plains and mountains the best blood of France, lost it for ever. Next came his expedition against Russia, an expedition against which his wisest counsellors remonstrated, but which had every recommendation to a man who regarded himself as an exception to his race, and able to triumph over the laws of nature. So insane were his self-confidence and impatience of opposition, that he drove by his outrages Sweden, the old ally of France, into the arms of Russia, at the very moment that he was about to throw himself into the heart of that mighty empire. On his

Hosted by Google

Russian campaign we have no desire to enlarge. Of all the mournful pages of history, none are more sad than that which records the retreat of the French army from Moscow. We remember, that, when the intelligence of Napoleon's discomfiture in Russia first reached this country, we were among those who exulted in it, thinking only of the results. But, when subsequent and minuter accounts brought distinctly before our eyes that unequalled army of France, broken, famished, slaughtered, seeking shelter under snowdrifts, and perishing by intense cold, we looked back on our joy with almost a consciousness of guilt, and expiated by a sincere grief our insensibility to the sufferings of our fellow-creatures. We understand that many interesting notices of Napoleon, as he appeared in this disastrous campaign, are given in the Memoirs of Count Segur, a book, from which we have been repelled by the sorrows and miseries which it details. We can conceive few subjects more worthy of Shakspeare than the mind of Napoleon, at the moment, when his fate was sealed; when the tide of his victories was suddenly stopped and rolled backwards; when his dreams of invincibleness were broken as by a peal of thunder; when the word, which had awed nations, died away on the bleak waste, a powerless sound; and when he, whose spirit Europe could not bound, fled in fear from a captive's doom. The shock must have been tremendous to a mind so imperious, scornful, and unschooled to humiliation. The intense agony of that moment when he gave the unusual orders, to retreat; the desolateness of his soul, when he saw his brave soldiers and his chosen guards sinking in the snows, and perishing in crowds around him; his unwillingness to receive the details of his

Hosted by Google

losses, lest self-possession should fail him; the levity and badinage of his interview with the Abbé de Pradt at Warsaw, discovering a mind laboring to throw off an insupportable weight, wrestling with itself, struggling against misery; and, though last not least, his unconquerable purpose, still clinging to lost empire as the only good of life; these workings of such a spirit would have furnished to the great dramatist a theme, worthy of his transcendent powers.

By the irretrievable disasters of the Russian campaign, the empire of the world was effectually placed beyond the grasp of Napoleon. The tide of conquest had ebbed, never to return. The spell which had bound the nations was dissolved. He was no longer the Invincible. The weight of military power, which had kept down the spirit of nations, was removed, and their long-smothered sense of wrong and insult broke forth like the fires of a volcano. Bonaparte might still, perhaps, have secured the throne of France; but that of Europe was gone. This, however, he did not, could not, would not understand. He had connected with himself too obstinately the character of the world's master, to be able to relinquish it. Amidst the dark omens which gathered round him, he still saw, in his past wonderful escapes, and in his own exaggerated energies, the means of rebuilding his fallen power. Accordingly the thought of abandoning his pretensions does not seem to have crossed his mind, and his irreparable defeat was only a summons to new exertion. — We doubt, indeed, whether Napoleon, if he could have understood fully his condition, would have adopted a different course. Though despairing, he would probably have raised new armies, and fought to the last.

Hosted by Google

To a mind, which has placed its whole happiness in having no equal, the thought of descending to the level even of kings is intolerable. Napoleon's mind had been stretched by such ideas of universal empire, that France, though reaching from the Rhine to the Pyrenees, seemed narrow to him. He could not be shut up in it. Accordingly, as his fortunes darkened, we see no signs of relenting. He could not wear, he said, "a tarnished crown," that is, a crown no brighter than those of Austria and Russia. He continued to use a master's tone. He showed no change, but such as opposition works in the obstinate; he lost his temper and grew sour. He heaped reproaches on his marshals and the legislative body. He insulted Metternich, the statesman, on whom, above all others, his fate depended. He irritated Murat by sarcasms, which rankled within him, and accelerated, if they did not determine, his desertion of his master. It is a striking example of retribution, that the very vehemence and sternness of his will, which had borne him onward to dominion, now drove him to the rejection of terms which might have left him a formidable power, and thus made his ruin entire. Refusing to take counsel of events, he persevered in fighting with a stubborness, which reminds us of a spoiled child, who sullenly grasps what he knows he must relinquish, struggles without hope, and does not give over resistance, until his little fingers are one by one unclenched from the object on which he has set his heart. Thus fell Napoleon. We shall follow his history no farther. His retreat to Elba, his irruption into France, his signal overthrow, and his banishment to St. Helena, though they add to the romance of his history, throw no new light on his char-

Hosted by Google

acter, and would of course contribute nothing to our present object. There are indeed incidents in this portion of his life, which are somewhat inconsistent with the firmness and conscious superiority which belonged to him. But a man, into whose character so much impulse, and so little principle entered, must not be expected to preserve unblemished, in such hard reverses, the dignity and self-respect of an emperor and a hero.

In the course of these remarks, our views of the Conqueror, of the First Consul, and of the Emperor, have been given plainly and freely. The subject, however, is so important and interesting, that we have thought it worth our while, though at the hazard of some repetition, to bring together, in a narrower compass, what seem to us the great leading features of the intellectual and moral character of Napoleon Bonaparte.

His intellect was distinguished by rapidity of thought. He understood by a glance what most men, and superior men, could learn only by study. He darted to a conclusion rather by intuition than reasoning. In war, which was the only subject of which he was master, he seized in an instant on the great points of his own and his enemy's positions; and combined at once the movements, by which an overpowering force might be thrown with unexpected fury on a vulnerable part of the hostile line, and the fate of an army be decided in a day. He understood war as a science; but his mind was too bold, rapid, and irrepressible, to be enslaved by the technics of his profession. He found the old armies fighting by rule, and he discovered the true characteristic of genius, which, without despising rules,

Hosted by Google

knows when and how to break them. He understood thoroughly the immense moral power, which is gained by originality and rapidity of operation. He astonished and paralyzed his enemies by his unforeseen and impetuous assaults, by the suddenness with which the storm of battle burst upon them; and, whilst giving to his soldiers the advantages of modern discipline, breathed into them, by his quick and decisive movements, the enthusiasm of ruder ages. This power of disheartening the foe, and of spreading through his own ranks a confidence, and exhilarating courage, which made war a pastime, and seemed to make victory sure, distinguished Napoleon in an age of uncommon military talent, and was one main instrument of his future power.

The wonderful effects of that rapidity of thought by which Bonaparte was marked, the signal success of his new mode of warfare, and the almost incredible speed with which his fame was spread through the nations, had no small agency in fixing his character and determining for a period the fate of empires. These stirring influences infused a new consciousness of his own might. They gave intensity and audacity to his ambition; gave form and substance to his indefinite visions of glory, and raised his fiery hopes to empire. The burst of admiration, which his early career called forth, must in particular have had an influence, in imparting to his ambition that modification by which it was characterized, and which contributed alike to its success and to its fall. He began with *astonishing* the world, with producing a sudden and universal *sensation*, such as modern times had not witnessed. To *astonish* as well as to sway by his energies, became the great aim of his

Hosted by Google

life. Henceforth, to rule was not enough for Bonaparte He wanted to amaze, to dazzle, to overpower men's souls, by striking, bold, magnificent, and unanticipated results. To govern ever so absolutely would not have satisfied him, if he must have governed silently. He wanted to reign through wonder and awe, by the grandeur and terror of his name, by displays of power which would rivet on him every eye, and make him the theme of every tongue. Power was his supreme object, but a power which should be gazed at as well as felt, which should strike men as a prodigy, which should shake old thrones as an earthquake, and, by the suddenness of its new creations, should awaken something of the submissive wonder which miraculous agency inspires.

Such seems to us to have been the distinction, or characteristic modification of his love of fame. It was a diseased passion for a kind of admiration, which, from the principles of our nature, cannot be enduring, and which demands for its support perpetual and more stimulating novelty. Mere esteem he would have scorned. Calm admiration, though universal and enduring, would have been insipid. He wanted to electrify and overwhelm. He lived for effect. The world was his theatre, and he cared little what part he played, if he might walk the sole hero on the stage, and call forth bursts of applause, which would silence all other fame. In war the triumphs which he coveted were those, in which he seemed to sweep away his foes like a whirlwind ; and the immense and unparalleled sacrifices of his own soldiers, in the rapid marches and daring assaults to which he owed his victories, in no degree diminished their worth to the victor. In peace,

Hosted by Google

he delighted to hurry through his dominions; to multiply himself by his rapid movements; to gather at a glance the capacities of improvement which every important place possessed; to suggest plans which would startle by their originality and vastness; to project in an instant, works which a life could not accomplish, and to leave behind the impression of a superhuman energy.

Our sketch of Bonaparte would be imperfect indeed, if we did not add, that he was characterized by nothing more strongly than by the spirit of *self-exaggeration*. The singular energy of his intellect and will, through which he had mastered so many rivals and foes, and overcome what seemed insuperable obstacles, inspired a consciousness of being something more than man. His strong original tendencies to pride and self-exaltation, fed and pampered by strange success and unbounded applause, swelled into an almost insane conviction of superhuman greatness. In his own view, he stood apart from other men. He was not to be measured by the standard of humanity. He was not to be retarded by difficulties to which all others yielded. He was not to be subjected to laws and obligations which all others were expected to obey. Nature and the human will were to bend to his power. He was the child and favorite of fortune, and, if not the lord, the chief object of destiny. His history shows a spirit of self-exaggeration, unrivalled in enlightened ages, and which reminds us of an Oriental king to whom incense had been burnt from his birth as to a deity. This was the chief source of his crimes. He wanted the sentiment of a common nature with his fellow-beings. He had no sympathies with his race. That feeling of

Hosted by Google

brotherhood, which is developed in truly great souls with peculiar energy, and through which they give up themselves willing victims, joyful sacrifices, to the interests of mankind, was wholly unknown to him. His heart, amidst its wild beatings, never had a throb of disinterested love. The ties which bind man to man he broke asunder. The proper happiness of a man, which consists in the victory of moral energy and social affection over the selfish passions, he cast away for the lonely joy of a despot. With powers, which might have made him a glorious representative and minister of the beneficent Divinity, and with natural sensibilities which might have been exalted into sublime virtues, he chose to separate himself from his kind, to forego their love, esteem, and gratitude, that he might become their gaze, their fear, their wonder; and, for this selfish, solitary good, parted with peace and imperishable renown.

This insolent exaltation of himself above the race to which he belonged, broke out in the beginning of his career. His first success in Italy gave him the tone of a master, and he never laid it aside to his last hour. One can hardly help being struck with the *natural* manner with which he arrogates supremacy in his conversation and proclamations. We never feel as if he were putting on a lordly air. In his proudest claims, he speaks from his own mind, and in native language. His style is swollen, but never strained, as if he were conscious of playing a part above his real claims. Even when he was foolish and impious enough to arrogate miraculous powers and a mission from God his language showed that he thought there was something in his character and exploits to give a color to

Hosted by Google

his blasphemous pretensions. The empire of the world seemed to him to be in a measure his due, for nothing short of it corresponded with his conceptions of himself; and he did not use mere verbiage, but spoke a language to which he gave some credit, when he called his successive conquests "the fulfilment of his destiny."

This spirit of self-exaggeration wrought its own misery, and drew down upon him terrible punishments; and this it did by vitiating and perverting his high powers. First, it diseased his fine intellect, gave imagination the ascendency over judgment, turned the inventiveness and fruitfulness of his mind into rash, impatient, restless energies, and thus precipitated him into projects, which, as the wisdom of his counsellors pronounced, were fraught with ruin. To a man, whose vanity took him out of the rank of human beings, no foundation for reasoning was left. All things seemed possible. His genius and his fortune were not to be bounded by the barriers, which experience had assigned to human powers. Ordinary rules did not apply to him. He even found excitement and motives in obstacles, before which other men would have wavered; for these would enhance the glory of triumph, and give a new thrill to the admiration of the world. Accordingly he again and again plunged into the depths of an enemy's country, and staked his whole fortune and power on a single battle. To be rash was indeed the necessary result of his self-exalting and self-relying spirit; for to dare what no other man would dare, to accomplish what no other man would attempt, was the very way to display himself as a superior being in his own and others' eyes. — To be impatient and restless was another necessary

Hosted by Google

issue of the attributes we have described. The calmness of wisdom was denied him. He, who was next to omnipotent in his own eyes, and who delighted to strike and astonish by sudden and conspicuous operations, could not brook delay or wait for the slow operations of time. A work, which was to be gradually matured by the joint agency of various causes, could not suit a man, who wanted to be felt as the great, perhaps only, cause; who wished to stamp his own agency in the most glaring characters on whatever he performed; and who hoped to rival, by a sudden energy, the steady and progressive works of nature. Hence so many of his projects were never completed, or only announced. They swelled, however, the tide of flattery, which ascribed to him the completion of what was not yet begun, whilst his restless spirit, rushing to new enterprises, forgot its pledges, and left the promised prodigies of his creative genius to exist only in the records of adulation. — Thus the rapid and inventive intellect of Bonaparte was depraved, and failed to achieve a growing and durable greatness. It reared, indeed, a vast and imposing structure, but disproportioned, disjointed, without strength, without foundations. One strong blast was enough to shake and shatter it, nor could his genius uphold it. Happy would it have been for his fame, had he been buried in its ruins!

One of the striking properties of Bonaparte's character was decision, and this, as we have already seen, was perverted, by the spirit of self-exaggeration, into an inflexible stubbornness, which counsel could not enlighten, nor circumstances bend. Having taken the first step, he pressed onward. His purpose he wished others to regard as a law of nature, or a decree of

Hosted by Google

destiny. It *must* be accomplished. Resistance but strengthened it; and so often had resistance been overborne, that he felt as if his unconquerable will, joined to his matchless intellect, could vanquish all things. On such a mind the warnings of human wisdom and of Providence were spent in vain; and the Man of Destiny lived to teach others, if not himself, the weakness and folly of that all-defying decision, which arrays the purposes of a mortal with the immutableness of the counsels of the Most High.

A still more fatal influence of the spirit of self-exaggeration, which characterized Bonaparte, remains to be named. It depraved to an extraordinary degree his moral sense. It did not obliterate altogether the ideas of duty, but by a singular perversion, it impelled him to apply them exclusively to others. It never seemed to enter his thought, that he was subject to the great obligations of morality, which all others are called to respect. He was an exempted being. Whatever stood in his way to empire, he was privileged to remove. Treaties only bound his enemies. No nation had rights but his own France. He claimed a monopoly in perfidy and violence. He was not naturally cruel; but, when human life obstructed his progress, it was a lawful prey, and murder and assassination occasioned as little compunction as war. The most luminous exposition of his moral code was given in his counsels to the King of Holland. "Never forget, that, in the situation to which my political system and the interests of my empire have called you, your first duty is towards ME, your second towards France. All your other duties, even those towards the people whom I have called you to govern, rank after these." To

Hosted by Google

his own mind he was the source and centre of duty. He was too peculiar and exalted, to be touched by that vulgar stain, called guilt. Crimes ceased to be such, when perpetrated by himself. Accordingly he always speaks of his transgressions as of indifferent acts. He never imagined that they tarnished his glory, or diminished his claim on the homage of the world. In St. Helena, though talking perpetually of himself, and often reviewing his guilty career, we are not aware that a single compunction escapes him. He speaks of his life as calmly as if it had been consecrated to duty and beneficence, whilst in the same breath he has the audacity to reproach unsparingly the faithlessness of almost every individual and nation, with whom he had been connected. We doubt whether history furnishes so striking an example of the moral blindness and obduracy, to which an unbounded egotism exposes and abandons the mind.

His spirit of self-exaggeration was seen in his openness to adulation. Policy indeed prompted him to put his praises into the mouths of the venal slaves, who administered his despotism. But flattery would not have been permitted to swell into exaggerations, now nauseous, now ludicrous, and now impious, if, in the bosom of the chief, there had not lodged a flatterer who sounded a louder note of praise than all around him. He was remarkably sensitive to opinion, and resented as a wrong the suppression of his praises. The press of all countries was watched, and free states were called upon to curb it for daring to take liberties with his name. Even in books published in France on general topics, he expected a recognition of his authority. Works of talent were suppressed, when their

Hosted by Google

authors refused to offer incense at the new shrine. He resolved, indeed, to stamp his name on the literature, as on the legislation, policy, warfare of his age, and to compel genius, whose pages survive statues, columns, and empires, to take a place among his tributaries.

We close our view of Bonaparte's character, by saying, that his original propensities, released from restraint, and pampered by indulgence, to a degree seldom allowed to mortals, grew up into a spirit of despotism as stern and absolute as ever usurped the human heart. The love of power and supremacy absorbed, consumed him. No other passion, no domestic attachment, no private friendship, no love of pleasure, no relish for letters or the arts, no human sympathy, no human weakness, divided his mind with the passion for dominion and for dazzling manifestations of his power. Before this, duty, honor, love, humanity, fell prostrate. Josephine, we are told, was dear to him; but the devoted wife, who had stood firm and faithful in the day of his doubtful fortunes, was cast off in his prosperity, to make room for a stranger, who might be more subservient to his power. He was affectionate, we are told, to his brothers and mother; but his brothers, the moment they ceased to be his tools, were disgraced; and his mother, it is said, was not allowed to sit in the presence of her imperial son.* He was sometimes softened, we are told, by the sight of the field of battle strewn with the wounded and dead. But, if the Moloch of his ambition claimed new heaps of slain to-morrow, it was

* See "America," page 57. We should not give this very unamiable trait of Napoleon's domestic character, but on authority which we cannot question

Hosted by Google

never denied. With all his sensibility, he gave millions to the sword, with as little compunction as he would have brushed away so many insects, which had infested his march. To him all human will, desire, power, were to bend. His superiority none might question. He insulted the fallen, who had contracted the guilt of opposing his progress; and not even woman's loveliness, and the dignity of a queen, could give shelter from his contumely. His allies were his vassals, nor was their vassalage concealed. Too lofty to use the arts of conciliation, preferring command to persuasion, overbearing, and all-grasping, he spread distrust, exasperation, fear, and revenge through Europe; and, when the day of retribution came, the old antipathies and mutual jealousies of nations were swallowed up in one burning purpose to prostrate the common tyrant, the universal foe.

Such was Napoleon Bonaparte. But some will say, he was still a great man. This we mean not to deny. But we would have it understood, that there are various kinds or orders of greatness, and that the highest did not belong to Bonaparte. There are different orders of greatness. Among these the first rank is unquestionably due to *moral* greatness, or magnanimity; to that sublime energy, by which the soul, smitten with the love of virtue, binds itself indissolubly, for life and for death, to truth and duty; espouses as its own the interests of human nature; scorns all meanness and defies all peril; hears in its own conscience a voice louder than threatenings and thunders; withstands all the powers of the universe, which would sever it from the cause of freedom and religion; reposes an unfaltering trust in God in the darkest hour, and is ever "ready to be

Hosted by Google

offered up" on the altar of its country or of mankind. Of this moral greatness, which throws all other forms of greatness into obscurity, we see not a trace in Napoleon. Though clothed with the power of a god, the thought of consecrating himself to the introduction of a new and higher era, to the exaltation of the character and condition of his race, seems never to have dawned on his mind. The spirit of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice seems not to have waged a moment's war with self-will and ambition. His ruling passions, indeed, were singularly at variance with magnanimity. Moral greatness has too much simplicity, is too unostentatious, too self-subsistent, and enters into others' interests with too much heartiness, to live an hour for what Napoleon always lived, to make itself the theme, and gaze, and wonder of a dazzled world. — Next to moral, comes *intellectual* greatness, or genius in the highest sense of that word; and by this we mean that sublime capacity of thought, through which the soul, smitten with the love of the true and the beautiful, essays to comprehend the universe, soars into the heavens, penetrates the earth, penetrates itself, questions the past, anticipates the future, traces out the general and all-comprehending laws of nature, binds together by innumerable affinities and relations all the objects of its knowledge, rises from the finite and transient to the infinite and the everlasting, frames to itself from its own fulness lovelier and sublimer forms than it beholds, discerns the harmonies between the world within and the world without us, and finds in every region of the universe types and interpreters of its own deep mysteries and glorious inspirations. This is the greatness which belongs to philosophers, and to the master spirits in

Hosted by Google

poetry and the fine arts.—Next comes the greatness of *action*; and by this we mean the sublime power of conceiving bold and extensive plans; of constructing and bringing to bear on a mighty object a complicated machinery of means, energies, and arrangements, and of accomplishing great outward effects. To this head belongs the greatness of Bonaparte, and that he possessed it, we need not prove, and none will be hardy enough to deny. A man, who raised himself from obscurity to a throne, who changed the face of the world, who made himself felt through powerful and civilized nations, who sent the terror of his name across seas and oceans, whose will was pronounced and feared as destiny, whose donatives were crowns, whose antechamber was thronged by submissive princes, who broke down the awful barrier of the Alps and made them a highway, and whose fame was spread beyond the boundaries of civilization to the steppes of the Cossack, and the deserts of the Arab; a man, who has left this record of himself in history, has taken out of our hands the question, whether he shall be called great. All must concede to him a sublime power of action, an energy equal to great effects.

We are not disposed, however, to consider him as preëminent even in this order of greatness. War was his chief sphere. He gained his ascendency in Europe by the sword. But war is not the field for the highest active talent, and Napoleon, we suspect, was conscious of this truth. The glory of being the greatest general of his age would not have satisfied him. He would have scorned to take his place by the side of Marlborough or Turenne. It was as the founder of an empire, which threatened for a time to comprehend the world,

Hosted by Google

and which demanded other talents besides that of war, that he challenged unrivalled fame. And here we question his claim. Here we cannot award him supremacy. The project of universal empire, however imposing, was not original. The revolutionary governments of France had adopted it before; nor can we consider it as a sure indication of greatness, when we remember that the weak and vain mind of Louis the Fourteenth was large enough to cherish it. The question is; Did Napoleon bring to this design the capacity of advancing it by bold and original conceptions, adapted to an age of civilization, and of singular intellectual and moral excitement? Did he discover new foundations of power? Did he frame new bonds of union for subjugated nations? Did he discover, or originate, some common interests by which his empire might be held together? Did he breathe a spirit which could supplant the old national attachments, or did he invent any substitutes for those vulgar instruments of force and corruption, which any and every usurper would have used? Never in the records of time did the world furnish such materials to work with, such means of modelling nations afresh, of building up a new power, of introducing a new era, as did Europe at the period of the French Revolution. Never was the human mind so capable of new impulses. And did Napoleon prove himself equal to the condition of the world? Do we detect one original conception in his means of universal empire? Did he seize on the enthusiasm of his age, that powerful principle, more efficient than arms or policy, and bend it to his purpose? What did he do but follow the beaten track? but apply force and fraud in their very coarsest forms? Napoleon showed a vulgar mind,

Hosted by Google

when he assumed self-interest as the sole spring of human action. With the sword in one hand and bribes in the other, he imagined himself absolute master of the human mind. The strength of moral, national, and domestic feeling, he could not comprehend. The finest, and, after all, the most powerful elements in human nature hardly entered into his conceptions of it; and how then could he have established a durable power over the human race? We want little more to show his want of originality and comprehensiveness, as the founder of an empire, than the simple fact, that he chose as his chief counsellors Talleyrand and Fouché, names which speak for themselves. We may judge of the greatness of the master spirit, from the minds which he found most congenial with his own. In war, Bonaparte was great; for he was bold, original, and creative. Beyond the camp he indeed showed talent, but not superior to that of other eminent men.

There have been two circumstances, which have done much to disarm or weaken the strong moral reprobation with which Bonaparte ought to have been regarded, and which we deem worthy of notice. We refer to the wrongs which he is supposed to have suffered at St. Helena, and to the unworthy use which the Allied Powers have made of their triumph over Napoleon. First, his supposed wrongs at St. Helena have excited a sympathy in his behalf, which has thrown a veil over his crimes. We are not disposed to deny, that an unwarrantable, because unnecessary, severity was exercised towards Bonaparte. We think it not very creditable to the British government, that it tortured a sensitive captive by refusing him a title

Hosted by Google

which he had long worn. We think, that not only religion and humanity, but self-respect forbids us to inflict a single useless pang on a fallen foe. But we should be weak indeed, if the moral judgments and feelings, with which Napoleon's career ought to be reviewed, should give place to sympathy with the sufferings by which it was closed. With regard to the scruples, which not a few have expressed, as to the right of banishing him to St. Helena, we can only say, that our consciences are not yet refined to such exquisite delicacy, as to be at all sensitive on this particular. We admire nothing more in Bonaparte, than the effrontery with which he claimed protection from the laws of nations. That a man, who had set these laws at open defiance, should fly to them for shelter; that the oppressor of the world should claim its sympathy as an oppressed man, and that his claim should find advocates; these things are to be set down among the extraordinary events of this extraordinary age. Truly, the human race is in a pitiable state. It may be trampled on, spoiled, loaded like a beast of burden, made the prey of rapacity, insolence, and the sword; but it must not touch a hair, or disturb the pillow, of one of its oppressors, unless it can find chapter and verse in the code of national law, to authorize its rudeness towards the privileged offender. For ourselves, we should rejoice to see every tyrant, whether a usurper or hereditary prince, fastened to a lonely rock in the ocean. Whoever gives clear, undoubted proof, that he is prepared and sternly resolved to make the earth a slaughterhouse, and to crush every will adverse to his own, ought to be caged like a wild beast; and to require mankind to proceed against him according to

Hosted by Google

written laws and precedents, as if he were a private citizen in a quiet court of justice, is just as rational as to require a man, in imminent peril from an assassin, to wait and prosecute his murderer according to the most protracted forms of law. There are great solemn rights of nature, which precede laws, and on which law is founded. There are great exigencies in human affairs, which speak for themselves, and need no precedent to teach the right path. There are awful periods in the history of our race, which do not belong to its ordinary state, and which are not to be governed and judged by ordinary rules. Such a period was that, when Bonaparte, by infraction of solemn engagements, had thrown himself into France, and convulsed all Europe; and they, who confound this with the ordinary events of history, and see in Bonaparte but an ordinary foe to the peace and independence of nations, have certainly very different intellects from our own.

We confess, too, that we are not only unable to see the wrong done to Napoleon in sending him to St. Helena, but that we cannot muster up much sympathy for the inconveniences and privations which he endured there. Our sympathies in this particular are wayward and untractable. When we would carry them to that solitary island, and fasten them on the illustrious victim of British cruelty, they will not tarry there, but take their flight across the Mediterranean to Jaffa, and across the Atlantic to the platform where the Duke d'Enghien was shot, to the prison of Toussaint, and to fields of battle where thousands at his bidding lay weltering in blood. When we strive to fix our thoughts upon the sufferings of the injured hero, other and more terrible sufferings, of which he was the cause, rush

Hosted by Google

upon us; and his complaints, however loud and angry, are drowned by groans and execrations, which fill our ears from every region which he traversed. We have no tears to spare for fallen greatness, when that greatness was founded in crime, and reared by force and perfidy. We reserve them for those on whose ruin it rose. We keep our sympathies for our race, for human nature in its humbler forms, for the impoverished peasant, the widowed mother, the violated virgin; and are even perverse enough to rejoice, that the ocean has a prison-house, where the author of those miseries may be safely lodged. Bonaparte's history is to us too solemn, the wrongs for which humanity and freedom arraign him are too flagrant, to allow us to play the part of sentimentalists around his grave at St. Helena. We leave this to the more refined age in which we live; and we do so in the hope, that an age is coming of less tender mould, but of loftier, sterner feeling, and of deeper sympathy with the whole human race. Should our humble page then live, we trust with an undoubting faith, that the uncompromising indignation, with which we plead the cause of our oppressed and insulted nature, will not be set down to the account of vindictiveness and hardness of heart.

We observed, that the moral indignation of many towards Bonaparte had been impaired or turned away, not only by his supposed wrongs, but by the unworthy use which his conquerors made of their triumph. We are told, that, bad as was his despotism, the Holy Alliance is a worse one; and that Napoleon was less a scourge, than the present coalition of the continental monarchs, framed for the systematic suppression of freedom. By such reasoning, his crimes are cloaked,

Hosted by Google

and his fall is made a theme of lamentation. It is not one of the smallest errors and sins of the Allied Sovereigns, that they have contrived, by their base policy, to turn the resentments and moral displeasure of men from the usurper upon themselves. For these sovereigns we have no defence to offer. We yield to none in detestation of the Holy Alliance, profanely so called. To us its doctrines are as false and pestilent, as any broached by Jacobinism. The Allied Monarchs are adding to the other wrongs of despots, that of flagrant ingratitude; of ingratitude to the generous and brave nations, to whom they owe their thrones, whose spirit of independence and patriotism, and whose hatred of the oppressor, contributed more than standing armies to raise up the fallen, and to strengthen the falling, monarchies of Europe. Be it never forgotten in the records of despotism, let history record it on her most durable tablet, that the first use made by the principal continental sovereigns of their regained or confirmed power, was, to conspire against the hopes and rights of the nations by whom they had been saved; to combine the military power of Europe against free institutions, against the press, against the spirit of liberty and patriotism which had sprung up in the glorious struggle with Napoleon, against the right of the people to exert an influence on the governments by which their dearest interests were to be controlled. Never be it forgotten, that such was the honor of sovereigns, such their requital for the blood which had been shed freely in their defence. Freedom and humanity send up a solemn and prevailing cry against them, to that tribunal, where kings and subjects are soon to stand as equals.

But still we should be strangely blind, if we were

Hosted by Google

not to feel, that the fall of Napoleon was a blessing to the world. Who can look, for example, at France, and not see there a degree of freedom, which could never have grown up under the terrible frown of the usurper? True, Bonaparte's life, though it seemed a charmed one, must at length have ended; and we are told, that then his empire would have been broken, and that the general crash, by some inexplicable process, would have given birth to a more extensive and durable liberty, than can now be hoped. But such anticipations seem to us to be built on a strange inattention to the nature and inevitable consequences of Napoleon's power. It was wholly a military power. He was literally turning Europe into a camp, and drawing its best talent into one occupation, war. Thus Europe was retracing its steps to those ages of calamity and darkness, when the only law was the sword. The progress of centuries, which had consisted chiefly in the substitution of intelligence, public opinion, and other mild and rational influences, for brutal force, was to be reversed. At Bonaparte's death, his empire must, indeed, have been dissolved; but military chiefs, like Alexander's lieutenants, would have divided it. The sword alone would have shaped its future communities; and, after years of desolation and bloodshed, Europe would have found, not repose, but a respite, an armed truce, under warriors, whose only title to empire would have been their own good blades, and the weight of whose thrones would have been upheld by military force alone. Amidst such convulsions, during which the press would have been everywhere fettered, and the military spirit would have triumphed over and swallowed up the spirit and glory of letters

Hosted by Google

and liberal arts, we greatly fear, that the human intellect would have lost its present impulse, its thirst for progress, and would have fallen back towards barbarism. Let not the friends of freedom bring dishonor on themselves or desert their cause, by instituting comparisons between Napoleon and legitimate sovereigns, which may be construed into eulogies on the former. For ourselves, we have no sympathy with tyranny, whether it bear the name of usurpation or legitimacy. We are not pleading the cause of the Allied Sovereigns. In our judgment, they have contracted the very guilt against which they have pretended to combine. In our apprehension, a conspiracy against the rights of the human race is as foul a crime, as rebellion against the rights of sovereigns; nor is there less of treason in warring against public freedom, than in assailing royal power. Still we are bound in truth to confess, that the Allied Sovereigns are not to be ranked with Bonaparte, whose design against the independence of nations and the liberties of the world, in this age of civilization, liberal thinking, and Christian knowledge, is in our estimation the most nefarious enterprise recorded in history.

The series of events, which it has been our province to review, offers subjects of profound thought and solemn instruction to the moralist and politician. We have retraced it with many painful feelings. It shows us a great people, who had caught some indistinct glimpses of freedom, and of a nobler and a happier political constitution, betrayed by their leaders, and brought back, by a military despot, to heavier chains than they had broken. We see with indignation one

Hosted by Google

man, a man like ourselves, subjecting whole nations to his absolute rule. It is this wrong and insult to our race which has chiefly moved us. Had a storm, of God's ordination, passed over Europe, prostrating its capitals, sweeping off its villages, burying millions in ruins, we should have wept, we should have trembled. But in this there would have been only wretchedness. Now we also see debasement. To us there is something radically and increasingly shocking, in the thought of one man's will becoming a law to his race ; in the thought of multitudes, of vast communities, surrendering conscience, intellect, their affections, their rights, their interests to the stern mandate of a fellow-creature. When we see one word of a frail man on the throne of France tearing a hundred thousand sons from their homes, breaking asunder the sacred ties of domestic life, sentencing myriads of the young to make murder their calling and rapacity their means of support, and extorting from nations their treasures to extend this ruinous sway, we are ready to ask ourselves, Is not this a dream ? And, when the sad reality comes home to us, we blush for a race which can stoop to such an abject lot. At length, indeed, we see the tyrant humbled, stripped of power ; but stripped by those who, in the main, are not unwilling to play the despot on a narrower scale, and to break down the spirit of nations under the same iron sway.

How is it, that tyranny has thus triumphed ? that the hopes with which we greeted the French revolution have been crushed ? that a usurper plucked up the last roots of the tree of liberty, and planted despotism in its place ? The chief cause is not far to seek, nor can it be too often urged on the friends of freedom.

Hosted by Google

France failed through the want of that moral preparation for liberty, without which the blessing cannot be secured. She was not ripe for the good she sought. She was too corrupt for freedom. France had indeed to contend with great political ignorance; but had not ignorance been re-inforced by deep moral defect, she might have won her way to free institutions. Her character forbade her to be free; and it now seems strange that we could ever have expected her to secure this boon. How could we believe, that a liberty, of which that heartless scoffer, Voltaire, was a chief apostle, could have triumphed? Most of the preachers of French liberty had thrown off all the convictions which ennoble the mind. Man's connexion with God they broke, for they declared that there was no God in whom to trust in the great struggle for liberty. Human immortality, that truth which is the seed of all greatness, they derided. To their philosophy, man was a creature of chance, a compound of matter, an ephemeron, a worm, who was soon to rot and perish for ever. What insanity was it to expect, that such men were to work out the emancipation of their race! that in such hands the hopes and dearest rights of humanity were secure! Liberty was tainted by their touch, polluted by their breath, and yet we trusted that it was to rise in health and glory from their embrace. We looked to men, who openly founded morality on private interest, for the sacrifices, the devotion, the heroic virtue, which Freedom always demands from her assertors.

The great cause of the discomfiture of the late European struggle for liberty, is easily understood by an American, who recurs to the history of his own

Hosted by Google

revolution. This issued prosperously, because it was begun and was conducted under the auspices of private and public virtue. Our liberty did not come to us by accident, nor was it the gift of a few leaders; but its seeds were sown plentifully in the minds of the whole people. It was rooted in the conscience and reason of the nation. It was the growth of deliberate convictions and generous principles liberally diffused. We had no Paris, no metropolis, which a few leaders swayed, and which sent forth its influences, like "a mighty heart," through dependent and subservient provinces. The country was all heart. The living principle pervaded the community, and every village added strength to the solemn purpose of being free. We have here an explanation of a striking fact in the history of our revolution; we mean the want or absence of that description of great men, whom we meet in other countries; men, who, by their distinct and single agency, and by their splendid deeds, determine a nation's fate. There was too much greatness in the American people, to admit this overshadowing greatness of leaders. Accordingly the United States had no liberator, no political saviour. Washington indeed conferred on us great blessings. But Washington was not a hero, in the common sense of that word. We never spoke of him as the French did of Bonaparte, never talked of his eagle-eyed, irresistible genius, as if this were to work out our safety. We never lost our self-respect. We felt that, under God, we were to be free through our own courage, energy, and wisdom, under the animating and guiding influences of this great and good mind. Washington served us chiefly by his sublime moral qualities. — To him belonged the

Hosted by Google

proud distinction of being the leader in a revolution, without awakening one doubt or solicitude as to the spotless purity of his purpose. His was the glory of being the brightest manifestation of the spirit which reigned in his country; and in this way he became a source of energy, a bond of union, the centre of an enlightened people's confidence. In such a revolution as that of France, Washington would have been nothing; for that sympathy, which subsisted between him and his fellow-citizens, and which was the secret of his power, would have been wanting. By an instinct which is unerring, we call Washington, with grateful reverence, the Father of his country, but not its Saviour. A people, which wants a saviour, which does not possess an earnest and pledge of freedom in its own heart, is not yet ready to be free.

A great question here offers itself, at which we can only glance. If a moral preparation is required for freedom, how, it is asked, can Europe ever be free? How, under the despotisms which now crush the continent, can nations grow ripe for liberty? Is it to be hoped, that men will learn, in the school of slavery, the spirit and virtues, which, we are told, can alone work out their deliverance? In the absolute governments of Europe, the very instruments of forming an enlightened and generous love of freedom are bent into the service of tyranny. The press is an echo of the servile doctrines of the court. The schools and seminaries of education are employed to taint the young mind with the maxims of despotism. Even Christianity is turned into a preacher of legitimacy, and its temples are desecrated by the abject teaching of unconditional submission. How then is the spirit

Hosted by Google

of a wise and moral freedom to be generated and diffused? We have stated the difficulty in its full force; for nothing is gained by winking out of sight the tremendous obstacles, with which liberal principles and institutions must contend. We have not time at present to answer the great question now proposed. We will only say, that we do not despair; and we will briefly suggest what seems to us the chief expedient, by which the cause of freedom, obstructed as it is, must now be advanced. In despotic countries, those men whom God has inspired with lofty sentiments and a thirst for freedom (and such are spread through all Europe,) must, in their individual capacity, communicate themselves to individual minds. The cause of liberty on the continent cannot now be forwarded by the action of men in masses. But in every country there are those who feel their degradation and their wrongs, who abhor tyranny as the chief obstruction of the progress of nations, and who are willing and prepared to suffer for liberty. Let such men spread around them their own spirit, by every channel which a jealous despotism has not closed. Let them give utterance to sentiments of magnanimity in private conference, and still more by the press; for there are modes of clothing and expressing kindling truths, which, it is presumed, no censorship would dare to proscribe. Let them especially teach that great truth, which is the seminal principle of a virtuous freedom, and the very foundation of morals and religion; we mean, the doctrine, that conscience, the voice of God in every heart, is to be listened to above all other guides and lords; that there is a sovereign within us, clothed with more awful powers and rights than any

Hosted by Google

outward king; and that he alone is worthy the name of a man, who gives himself up solemnly, deliberately, to obey this internal guide through peril and in death. This is the spirit of freedom; for no man is wholly and immutably free but he who has broken every outward yoke, that he may obey his own deliberate conscience. This is the lesson to be taught alike in republics and despotisms. As yet it has but dawned on the world. Its full application remains to be developed. They who have been baptized, by a true experience, into this vital and all-comprehending truth, must everywhere be its propagators; and he, who makes one convert of it near a despot's throne, has broken one link of that despot's chain. It is chiefly in the diffusion of this loftiness of moral sentiment that we place our hope of freedom; and we have a hope, because we know that there are those who have drunk into this truth, and are ready, when God calls, to be its martyrs. We do not despair, for there is a contagion, we would rather say, a divine power, in sublime moral principle. This is our chief trust. We have less and less hope from force and bloodshed, as the instruments of working out man's redemption from slavery. History shows us not a few princes, who have gained or strengthened thrones by assassination or war. But freedom, which is another name for justice, honor, and benevolence, scorns to use the private dagger, and wields with trembling the public sword. The true conspiracy before which tyranny is to fall, is that of virtuous, elevated minds, which shall consecrate themselves to the work of awakening in men a consciousness of the rights, powers, purposes, and greatness of human nature; which shall oppose to force, the heroism of intellect

Hosted by Google

and conscience, and the spirit of self-sacrifice. We believe, that, at this moment, there are virtue and wisdom enough to shake despotic thrones, were they as confiding as they should be, in God and in their own might, and were they to pour themselves through every channel into the public mind.

We close our present labors, with commending to the protection of Almighty God the cause of human freedom and improvement. We adore the wisdom and goodness of his providence, which has ordained, that liberty shall be wrought ought by the magnanimity, courage, and sacrifices of men. We bless him for the glorious efforts which this cause has already called forth; for the intrepid defenders who have gathered round it, and whose fame is a most precious legacy of past ages; for the toils and sufferings by which it has been upheld; for the awakening and thrilling voice which comes to us from the dungeon and scaffold, where the martyrs of liberty have pined or bled. We bless him, that even tyranny has been overruled for good, by exciting a resistance, which has revealed to us the strength of virtuous principle in the human soul. We beseech this Great and Good Parent, from whom all pure influences proceed, to enkindle, by his quickening breath, an unquenchable love of virtue and freedom in those favored men, whom he hath enriched and signalized by eminent gifts and powers, that they may fulfil the high function of inspiring their fellow-beings with a consciousness of the birthright and destination of human nature. Wearied with violence and blood, we beseech him to subvert oppressive governments, by the gentle, yet awful, power of truth and virtue; by the teachings of uncorrupted Christianity; by the

Hosted by Google

sovereignty of enlightened opinion; by the triumph of sentiments of magnanimity; by mild, rational, and purifying influences, which will raise the spirit of the enslaved, and which sovereigns will be unable to withstand. For this peaceful revolution we earnestly pray. If, however, after long, forbearing, and unavailing applications to justice and humanity, the friends of freedom should be summoned, by the voice of God within, and by his providence abroad, to vindicate their rights with other arms, to do a sterner work, to repel despotic force by force, may they not forget, even in this hour of provocation, the spirit which their high calling demands. Let them take the sword with awe, as those on whom a holy function is devolved. Let them regard themselves as ministers and delegates of Him, whose dearest attribute is Mercy. Let them not stain their sacred cause by one cruel deed, by the infliction of one needless pang, by shedding without cause one drop of human blood.

Hosted by Google

PART II.

In a former number of our work,* we reviewed the life and character of Napoleon Bonaparte. We resume the subject, not for the purpose of speaking more largely of the individual, but that we may consider more distinctly the *principle of action* which governed him, and of which he was a remarkable manifestation.

Power was the idol to which Bonaparte sacrificed himself. To gain supremacy and unlimited sway, to subject men to his will, was his chief, settled, unrelenting purpose. This passion drew and converted into itself the whole energy of his nature. The love of power, that common principle, explains, in a great degree, his character and life. His crimes did not spring from any impulse peculiar to himself. With all his contempt of the human race, he still belonged to it. It is true both of the brightest virtues and the blackest vices, though they seem to set apart their possessors from the rest of mankind, that the seeds of them are sown in every human breast. The man, who attracts and awes us by his intellectual and moral grandeur, is only an example and anticipation of the improvements, for which every mind was endowed with reason and conscience; and the worst man has become such by the perversion and excess of desires and appetites

* Christian Examiner, Vol. IV. No. V.

Hosted by Google

which he shares with his whole race. Napoleon had no element of character which others do not possess. It was his misery and guilt that he was usurped and absorbed by one passion; that his whole mind shot up into one growth; that his singular strength of thought and will, which, if consecrated to virtue, would have enrolled him among the benefactors of mankind, was enslaved by one lust. He is not to be gazed on as a miracle. He was a manifestation of our own nature. He teaches on a large scale what thousands teach on a narrow one. He shows us the greatness of the ruin which is wrought, when the order of the mind is subverted, conscience dethroned, and a strong passion left without restraint to turn every inward and outward resource to the accomplishment of a selfish purpose.

The influence of the *love of power* on human affairs is so constant, unbounded, and tremendous, that we think this principle of our nature worthy of distinct consideration, and shall devote to it a few pages, as a fit sequel to our notice of Bonaparte.

The passion for power is one of the most universal; nor is it to be regarded as a crime in all its forms. Sweeping censures on a natural sentiment cast blame on the Creator. This principle shows itself in the very dawn of our existence. The child never exults and rejoices more, than when it becomes conscious of power by overcoming difficulties, or compassing new ends. All our desires and appetites lend aid and energy to this passion, for all find increase of gratification, in proportion to the growth of our strength and influence. We ought to add, that this principle is fed from nobler sources. Power is a chief element of all the command-

Hosted by Google

ing qualities of our nature. It enters into all the higher virtues; such as magnanimity, fortitude, constancy. It enters into intellectual eminence. It is power of thought and utterance which immortalizes the products of genius. Is it strange that an attribute, through which all our passions reach their objects, and which characterizes whatever is great or admirable in man, should awaken intense desire, and be sought as one of the chief goods of life?

This principle, we have said, is not in all its forms a crime. There are indeed various kinds of power, which it is our duty to covet, accumulate, and hold fast. First, there is *inward* power, the most precious of all possessions; power over ourselves; power to withstand trial, to bear suffering, to front danger; power over pleasure and pain; power to follow our convictions, however resisted by menace or scorn; the power of calm reliance in seasons of darkness and storms. Again, there is a power over *outward* things; the power by which the mind triumphs over matter, presses into its service the subtilest and strongest elements, makes the winds, fire, and steam its ministers, rears the city, opens a path through the ocean, and makes the wilderness blossom as the rose. These forms of power, especially the first, are glorious distinctions of our race, nor can we prize them too highly.

There is another power, which is our principal concern in the present discussion. We mean power over our fellow-creatures. It is this which ambition chiefly covets, and which has instigated to more crime, and spread more misery, than any other cause. We are not however to condemn even this universally. There is a truly noble sway of man over man; one, which it

Hosted by Google

is our honor to seek and exert; which is earned by well-doing; which is a chief recompense of virtue. We refer to the quickening influence of a good and great mind over other minds, by which it brings them into sympathy with itself. Far from condemning this, we are anxious to hold it forth as the purest glory which virtuous ambition can propose. The power of awakening, enlightening, elevating our fellow-creatures may, with peculiar fitness, be called divine; for there is no agency of God so beneficent and sublime as that which he exerts on rational natures, and by which he assimilates them to himself. This sway over other souls is the surest test of greatness. We admire, indeed, the energy which subdues the material creation, or developes the physicial resources of a state. But it is a nobler might which calls forth the intellectual and moral resources of a people, which communicates new impulses to society, throws into circulation new and stirring thoughts, gives the mind a new consciousness of its faculties, and rouses and fortifies the will to an unconquerable purpose of well-doing. This spiritual power is worth all other. To improve man's outward condition is a secondary agency, and is chiefly important as it gives the means of inward growth. The most glorious minister of God on earth is he, who speaks with a life-giving energy to other minds, breathing into them the love of truth and virtue, strengthening them to suffer in a good cause, and lifting them above the senses and the world.

We know not a more exhilarating thought, than that this power is given to men; that we can not only change the face of the outward world, and by virtuous discipline improve ourselves, but that we may become

Hosted by Google

springs of life and light to our fellow-beings. We are thus admitted to a fellowship with Jesus Christ, whose highest end was, that he might act with a new and celestial energy on the human mind. We rejoice to think, that he did not come to monopolize this divine sway, to enjoy a solitary grandeur, but to receive others, even all who should obey his religion, into the partnership of this honor and happiness. Every Christian, in proportion to his progress, acquires a measure of this divine agency. In the humblest conditions, a power goes forth from a devout and disinterested spirit, calling forth silently moral and religious sentiment, perhaps in a child, or some other friend, and teaching, without the aid of words, the loveliness and peace of sincere and single-hearted virtue. In the more enlightened classes, individuals now and then rise up, who, through a singular force and elevation of soul, obtain a sway over men's minds to which no limit can be prescribed. They speak with a voice which is heard by distant nations, and which goes down to future ages. Their names are repeated with veneration by millions; and millions read in their lives and writings a quickening testimony to the greatness of the mind, to its moral strength, to the reality of disinterested virtue. These are the true sovereigns of the earth. They share in the royalty of Jesus Christ. They have a greatness which will be more and more felt. The time is coming, its signs are visible, when this long mistaken attribute of greatness will be seen to belong eminently, if not exclusively, to those, who, by their characters, deeds, sufferings, writings, leave imperishable and ennobling traces of themselves on the human mind. Among these legitimate sovereigns of

Hosted by Google

the world, will be ranked the philosopher, who penetrates the secrets of the universe, and of the soul; who opens new fields to the intellect; who gives it a new consciousness of its own powers, rights, and divine original; who spreads enlarged and liberal habits of thought; and who helps men to understand, that an ever-growing knowledge is the patrimony destined for them by the "Father of their spirits." Among them will be ranked the statesman, who, escaping a vulgar policy, rises to the discovery of the true interest of a state; who seeks without fear or favor the common good; who understands that a nation's mind is more valuable than its soil; who inspirits a people's enterprise, without making them the slaves of wealth; who is mainly anxious to originate or give stability to institutions by which society may be carried forward; who confides with a sublime constancy in justice and virtue, as the only foundation of a wise policy and of public prosperity; and, above all, who has so drunk into the spirit of Christ and of God, as never to forget, that his particular country is a member of the great human family, bound to all nations, by a common nature, by a common interest, and by indissoluble laws of equity and charity. Among these will be ranked, perhaps on the highest throne, the moral and religious Reformer, who truly merits that name; who rises above his times; who is moved by a holy impulse to assail vicious establishments, sustained by fierce passions and inveterate prejudices; who rescues great truths from the corruptions of ages; who, joining calm and deep thought to profound feeling, secures to religion at once enlightened and earnest conviction; who unfolds to men higher forms of virtue than they have yet attained or conceived,

Hosted by Google

who gives brighter and more thrilling views of the perfection for which they were framed, and inspires a victorious faith in the perpetual progress of our nature.

There is one characteristic of this power which belongs to truly great minds, particularly deserving notice. Far from enslaving, it makes more and more free, those on whom it is exercised ; and in this respect it differs wholly from the vulgar sway which ambition thirsts for. It awakens a kindred power in others, calls their faculties into new life, and particularly strengthens them to follow their own deliberate convictions of truth and duty. It breathes conscious energy, self-respect, moral independence, and a scorn of every foreign yoke.

There is another power over men, very different from this ; a power, not to quicken and elevate, but to crush and subdue ; a power which robs men of the free use of their nature, takes them out of their own hands, and compels them to bend to another's will. This is the sway which men grasp at most eagerly, and which it is our great purpose to expose. To reign, to give laws, to clothe their own wills with omnipotence, to annihilate all other wills, to spoil the individual of that self-direction which is his most precious right, — this has ever been deemed by multitudes the highest prize for competition and conflict. The most envied men are those, who have succeeded in prostrating multitudes, in subjecting whole communities, to their single will. It is the love of this power, in all its forms, which we are anxious to hold up to reprobation. If any crime should be placed by society beyond pardon, it is this.

This power has been exerted most conspicuously and perniciously by two classes of men ; the priest or minister of religion, and the civil ruler. Both rely on

Hosted by Google

the same instrument; that is, pain or terror; the first calling to his aid the fires and torments of the future world, and practising on the natural dread of invisible powers; and the latter availing himself of chains, dungeons, and gibbets in the present life. Through these terrible applications, man has, in all ages and in almost every country, been made, in a greater or less degree, a slave and machine; been shackled in all his faculties, and degraded into a tool of others' wills and passions. The influence of almost every political and religious institution has been to make man abject in mind, fearful, servile, a mechanical repeater of opinions which he dares not try, and a contributor of his toil, sweat, and blood, to governments which never dreamed of the general weal as their only legitimate end. On the immense majority of men, thus wronged and enslaved, the consciousness of their own nature has not yet dawned; and the doctrine, that each has a mind, worth more than the material world, and framed to grow for ever by a self-forming, self-directing energy, is still a secret, a mystery, notwithstanding the clear annunciation of it, ages ago, by Jesus Christ. We know not a stronger proof of the intenseness and nefariousness of the love of power, than the fact of its having virtually abrogated Christianity, and even turned into an engine of dominion, a revelation which breathes throughout the spirit of freedom, proclaims the essential equality of the human race, and directs its most solemn denunciations against the passion for rule and empire.

That this power, which consists in force and compulsion, in the imposition on the many of the will and judgment of one or a few, is of a low order, when

Hosted by Google

compared with the quickening influence over others, of which we have before spoken, we need not stop to prove. But the remark is less obvious, though not less true, that it is not only inferior in kind, but in amount or degree. This may not be so easily acknowledged. He, whose will is passively obeyed by a nation, or whose creed implicitly adopted by a spreading sect, may not easily believe, that his power is exceeded, not only in kind or quality, but in extent, by him who wields only the silent, subtile influence of moral and intellectual gifts. But the superiority of moral to arbitrary sway in this particular, is proved by its effects. Moral power is creative; arbitrary power wastes away the spirit and force of those on whom it is exerted. And is it not a mightier work to create than to destroy? A higher energy is required to quicken than to crush; to elevate than to depress; to warm and expand than to chill and contract. Any hand, even the weakest, may take away life; another agency is required to kindle or restore it. A vulgar incendiary may destroy in an hour a magnificent structure, the labor of ages. Has he energy to be compared with the creative intellect, in which this work had its origin? A fanatic of ordinary talent may send terror through a crowd; and by the craft, which is so often joined with fanaticism, may fasten on multitudes a debasing creed. Has he power to be compared with him, who rescues from darkness one only of these enslaved minds, and quickens it to think justly and nobly in relation to God, duty, and immortality? The energies of a single soul, awakened, by such an influence, to the free and full use of its powers, may surpass, in their progress, the intellectual activity of a whole community, enchained

Hosted by Google

and debased by fanaticism or outward force. Arbitrary power, whether civil or religious, if tried by the only fair test, that is, by its effects, seems to have more affinity with weakness than strength. It enfeebles and narrows what it acts upon. Its efficiency resembles that of darkness and cold in the natural world. True power is vivifying, productive, builds up, and gives strength. We have a noble type and manifestation of it in the sun, which calls forth and diffuses motion, life, energy, and beauty. He who succeeds in chaining men's understandings, and breaking their wills, may indeed number millions as his subjects. But a weak, puny race are the products of his sway, and they can only reach the stature and force of men by throwing off his yoke. He who, by an intellectual and moral energy, awakens kindred energy in others, touches springs of infinite might, gives impulse to faculties to which no bounds can be prescribed, begins an action which will never end. One great and kindling thought from a retired and obscure man, may live when thrones are fallen, and the memory of those who filled them obliterated, and, like an undying fire, may illuminate and quicken all future generations.

We have spoken of the inferiority and worthlessness of that dominion over others, which has been coveted so greedily in all ages. We should rejoice could we convey some just idea of its moral turpitude. Of all injuries and crimes, the most flagrant is chargeable on him who aims to establish dominion over his brethren. He wars with what is more precious than life. He would rob men of their chief prerogative and glory; we mean, of self-dominion, of that empire which is given to a rational and moral being over his own soul and his

Hosted by Google

own life. Such a being is framed to find honor and happiness in forming and swaying himself, in adopting as his supreme standard his convictions of truth and duty, in unfolding his powers by free exertion, in acting from a principle within, from his growing conscience. His proper and noblest attributes are self-government, self-reverence, energy of thought, energy in choosing the right and the good, energy in casting off all other dominion. He was created for empire in his own breast, and woe, woe to them who would pluck from him this sceptre! A mind, inspired by God with reason and conscience, and capable, through these endowments, of progress in truth and duty, is a sacred thing; more sacred than temples made with hands, or even than this outward universe. It is of nobler lineage than that of which human aristocracy makes its boast. It bears the lineaments of a Divine Parent. It has not only a physical, but moral connexion with the Supreme Being. Through its self-determining power, it is accountable for its deeds, and for whatever it becomes. Responsibility, that which above all things makes existence solemn, is laid upon it. Its great end is to conform itself, by its own energy, and by spiritual succours which its own prayers and faithfulness secure, to that perfection of wisdom and goodness, of which God is the original and source, which shines upon us from the whole outward world, but of which the intelligent soul is a truer recipient and a brighter image, even than the sun with all his splendors. From these views we learn, that no outrage, no injury, can equal that, which is perpetrated by him, who would break down and subjugate the human mind; who would rob men of self-reverence; who would bring them to stand

Hosted by Google

more in awe of outward authority, than of reason and conscience in their own souls; who would make himself a standard and law for his race, and shape, by force or terror, the free spirits of others after his own judgment and will.

All excellence, whether intellectual or moral, involves, as its essential elements, freedom, energy, and moral independence, so that the invader of these, whether from the throne or the pulpit, invades the most sacred interest of the human race. Intellectual excellence implies and requires these. This does not consist in passive assent even to the highest truths; or in the most extensive stores of knowledge acquired by an implicit faith, and lodged in the inert memory. It lies in force, freshness, and independence of thought; and is most conspicuously manifested by him, who, loving truth supremely, seeks it resolutely, follows the light without fear, and modifies the views of others by the patient, strenuous exercise of his own faculties. To a man thus intellectually free, truth is not, what it is to passive multitudes, a foreign substance, dormant, lifeless, fruitless, but penetrating, prolific, full of vitality, and ministering to the health and expansion of the soul. And what we have said of intellectual excellence is still more true of moral. This has its foundation and root in freedom, and cannot exist a moment without it. The very idea of virtue is, that it is a free act, the product or result of the mind's self-determining power. It is not good feeling, infused by nature or caught by sympathy; nor is it good conduct into which we have slidden through imitation, or which has been forced upon us by another's will. We ourselves are its authors in a high and peculiar sense. We indeed depend on

Hosted by Google

God for virtue; for our capacity of moral action s wholly his gift and inspiration, and without his perpetual aid this capacity would avail nothing. But his aid is not compulsion. He respects, he cannot violate, that moral freedom which is his richest gift. To the individual, the decision of his own character is left. He has more than kingly power in his own soul. Let him never resign it. Let none dare to interfere with it. Virtue is self-dominion, or, what is the same thing, it is self-subjection to the principle of duty, that highest law in the soul. If these views of intellectual and moral excellence be just, then to invade men's freedom is to aim the deadliest blow at their honor and happiness; and their worst foe is he who fetters their reason, who makes his will their law, who makes them tools, echoes, copies of himself.

Perhaps it may be objected to the representation of virtue as consisting in self-dominion, that the Scriptures speak of it as consisting in obedience to God. But these are perfectly compatible and harmonious views; for genuine obedience to God is the free choice and adoption of a law, the great principles of which our own minds approve, and our own consciences bind on us; which is not an arbitrary injunction, but an emanation and expression of the Divine Mind; and which is intended throughout to give energy, dignity, and enlargement to our best powers. He, and he only, obeys God virtuously and acceptably, who reverences right, not power; who has chosen rectitude as his supreme rule; who sees and reveres in God the fulness and brightness of moral excellence, and who sees in obedience the progress and perfection of his own nature. That subjection to the Deity, which, we fear, is too

Hosted by Google

common, in which the mind surrenders itself to mere power and will, is any thing but virtue. We fear that it is disloyalty to that moral principle, which is ever to be reverenced as God's vicegerent in the rational soul.

Perhaps some may fear, that, in our zeal for the freedom and independence of the individual mind, we unsettle government, and almost imply that it is a wrong. Far from it. We hold government to be an essential means of our intellectual and moral education, and would strengthen it by pointing out its legitimate functions. Government, as far as it is rightful, is the guardian and friend of freedom, so that in exalting the one we enforce the other. The highest aim of all authority is to confer liberty. This is true of domestic rule. The great, we may say the single object of parental government, of a wise and virtuous education, is, to give the child the fullest use of his own powers; to give him inward force; to train him up to govern himself. The same is true of the authority of Jesus Christ. He came, indeed, to rule mankind; but to rule them, not by arbitrary statutes, not by force and menace, not by mere will, but by setting before them, in precept and life, those everlasting rules of rectitude, which Heaven obeys, and of which every soul contains the living germs. He came to exert a moral power; to reign by the manifestation of celestial virtues; to awaken the energy of holy purpose in the free mind. He came to publish liberty to the captives; to open the prison door; to break the power of the passions; to break the yoke of a ceremonial religion which had been imposed in the childhood of the race; to exalt us to a manly homage and obedience of our Creator. Of civil government, too, the great end is to secure freedom. Its

Hosted by Google

proper, and highest function is, to watch over the liberties of each and all, and to open to a community the widest field for all its powers. Its very chains and prisons have the general freedom for their aim. They are just, only when used to curb oppression and wrong; to disarm him who has a tyrant's heart, if not a tyrant's power, who wars against others' rights, who, by invading property or life, would substitute force for the reign of equal laws. Freedom, we repeat it, is the end of government. To exalt men to self-rule is the end of all other rule; and he, who would fasten on them his arbitrary will, is their worst foe.

We have aimed to show the guilt of the love of power and dominion, by showing the ruin which it brings on the mind, by enlarging on the preciousness of that inward freedom which it invades and destroys. To us, this view is the most impressive; but the guilt of this passion may also be discerned, and by some more clearly, in its outward influences; in the desolation, bloodshed, and woe, of which it is the perpetual cause. We owe to it almost all the miseries of war. To spread the sway of one or a few, thousands and millions have been turned into machines under the name of soldiers, armed with instruments of destruction, and then sent to reduce others to their own lot by fear and pain, by fire and sword, by butchery and pillage. And is it light guilt, to array man against his brother; to make murder the trade of thousands; to drench the earth with human blood; to turn it into a desert; to scatter families like chaff; to make mothers widows, and children orphans; and to do all this for the purpose of spreading a still gloomier desolation, for the purpose of subjugating men's souls, turning them into base para-

Hosted by Google

sites, extorting from them a degrading homage, humbling them in their own eyes, and breaking them to servility as the chief duty of life? When the passion for power succeeds, as it generally has done, in establishing despotism, it seems to make even civilization a doubtful good. Whilst the monarch and his court are abandoned to a wasteful luxury, the peasantry, rooted to the soil and doomed to a perpetual round of labors, are raised but little above the brute. There are parts of Europe, Christian Europe, in which the peasant, through whose sweat kings and nobles riot in plenty, seems to enjoy less, on the whole, than the untamed Indian of our forests. Chained to one spot, living on the cheapest vegetables, sometimes unable to buy salt to season his coarse fare, seldom or never tasting animal food, having for his shelter a mud-walled hut floored with earth or stone, and subjected equally with the brute to the rule of a superior, he seems to us to partake less of animal, intellectual, and moral pleasures, than the free wanderer of the woods, whose steps no man fetters; whose wigwam no tyrant violates; whose chief toil is hunting, that noblest of sports; who feasts on the deer, that most luxurious of viands; to whom streams, as well as woods, pay tribute; whose adventurous life gives sagacity; and in whom peril nourishes courage and self-command. We are no advocates for savage life. We know that its boasted freedom is a delusion. The single fact, that human nature in this wild state makes no progress, is proof enough that it wants true liberty. We mean only to say, that man, in the hands of despotism, is sometimes degraded below the savage; that it were better for him to be lawless, then to live under lawless sway.

Hosted by Google

It is the part of Christians to look on the passion for power and dominion with strong abhorrence; for it is singularly hostile to the genius of their religion. Jesus Christ always condemned it. One of the striking marks of his moral greatness, and of the originality of his character, was, that he held no fellowship and made no compromise with this universal spirit of his age, but withstood it in every form. He found the Jews intoxicating themselves with dreams of empire. Of the prophecies relating to the Messiah, the most familiar and dear to them were those, which announced him as a conqueror, and which were construed by their worldliness into a promise of triumphs to the people from whom he was to spring. Even the chosen disciples of Jesus looked to him for this good. "To sit on his right hand and on his left," or, in other words, to hold the most commanding station in his kingdom, was not only their lurking wish, but their open and importunate request. But there was no passion on which Jesus frowned more severely than on this. He taught, that, to be great in his kingdom, men must serve, instead of ruling, their brethren. He placed among them a child as an emblem of the humility of his religion. His most terrible rebukes fell on the lordly, aspiring Pharisee. In his own person, he was mild and condescending, exacting no personal service, living with his disciples as a friend, sharing their wants, sleeping in their fishing-boat, and even washing their feet; and in all this, he expressly proposed himself to them as a pattern, knowing well, that the last triumph of disinterestedness is to forget our own superiority, in our sympathy, solicitude, tenderness, respect, and self-denying zeal for those who are below us. We cannot indeed wonder

Hosted by Google

that the lust of power should be encountered by the sternest rebukes and menace of Christianity, because it wages open war with the great end of this religion, which is the elevation of the human mind. No corruption of this religion is more palpable and more enormous, than that which turns it into an instrument of dominion, and which makes it teach, that man's primary duty is to give himself a passive material into the hands of his minister, priest, or king.

The subject which we now discuss is one in which all nations have an interest, and especially our own; and we should fail of our main purpose, were we not to lead our readers to apply it to ourselves. The passion for ruling, though most completely developed in despotisms, is confined to no forms of government. It is the chief peril of free states, the natural enemy of free institutions. It agitates our own country, and still throws an uncertainty over the great experiment we are making here in behalf of liberty. We will try then, in a few words, to expose its influences and dangers, and to abate that zeal with which a participation in office and power is sought among ourselves.

It is the distinction of republican institutions, that whilst they compel the passion for power to moderate its pretensions, and to satisfy itself with more limited gratifications, they tend to spread it more widely through the community, and to make it a universal principle. The doors of office being open to all, crowds burn to rush in. A thousand hands are stretched out to grasp the reins which are denied to none. Perhaps, in this boasted and boasting land of liberty, not a few, if called to state the chief good of a republic, would place it in this; that every man is eligible to every

Hosted by Google

office, and that the highest places of power and trust are prizes for universal competition. The superiority attributed by many to our institutions is, not that they secure the greatest freedom, but give every man a chance of ruling; not that they reduce the power of government within the narrowest limits which the safety of the state admits, but throw it into as many hands as possible. The despot's great crime is thought to be, that he keeps the delight of dominion to himself, that he makes a monopoly of it, whilst our more generous institutions, by breaking it into parcels, and inviting the multitude to scramble for it, spread this joy more widely. The result is, that political ambition infects our country, and generates a feverish restlessness and discontent, which, to the monarchist, may seem more than a balance for our forms of liberty. The spirit of intrigue, which in absolute governments is confined to courts, walks abroad through the land; and, as individuals can accomplish no political purposes single-handed, they band themselves into parties, ostensibly framed for public ends, but aiming only at the acquisition of power. The nominal sovereign, that is, the people, like all other sovereigns, is courted and flattered, and told that it can do no wrong. Its pride is pampered, its passions inflamed, its prejudices made inveterate. Such are the processes, by which other republics have been subverted, and he must be blind who cannot trace them among ourselves. We mean not to exaggerate our dangers. We rejoice to know, that the improvements of society oppose many checks to the love of power. But every wise man, who sees its workings, must dread it as our chief foe.

This passion derives strength and vehemence in our

Hosted by Google

country from the common idea, that political power is the highest prize which society has to offer. We know not a more general delusion, nor is it the least dangerous. Instilled, as it is, in our youth, it gives infinite excitement to political ambition. It turns the active talent of the country to public station as the supreme good, and makes it restless, intriguing, and unprincipled. It calls out hosts of selfish competitors for comparatively few places, and encourages a bold, unblushing pursuit of personal elevation, which a just moral sense and self-respect in the community would frown upon and cover with shame. This prejudice has come down from past ages, and is one of their worst bequests. To govern others has always been thought the highest function on earth. We have a remarkable proof of the strength and pernicious influence of this persuasion, in the manner in which history has been written. Who fill the page of history? Political and military leaders, who have lived for one end, to subdue and govern their fellow-beings. These occupy the foreground, and the people, the human race, dwindle into insignificance, and are almost lost behind their masters. The proper and noblest object of history is, to record the vicissitudes of society, its spirit in different ages, the causes which have determined its progress and decline, and especially the manifestations and growth of its highest attributes and interests, of intelligence, of the religious principle, of moral sentiment, of the elegant and useful arts, of the triumphs of man over nature and himself. Instead of this, we have records of men in power, often weak, oftener wicked, who did little or nothing for the advancement of their age, who were in no sense its representatives, whom the accident

Hosted by Google

of birth perhaps raised to influence. We have the quarrels of courtiers, the intrigues of cabinets, sieges and battles, royal births and deaths, and the secrets of a palace, that sink of lewdness and corruption. These are the staples of history. The inventions of printing, of gunpowder, and the mariner's compass, were too mean affairs for history to trace. She was bowing before kings and warriors. She had volumes for the plots and quarrels of Leicester and Essex in the reign of Elizabeth, but not a page for Shakspeare; and if Bacon had not filled an office, she would hardly have recorded his name, in her anxiety to preserve the deeds and sayings of that Solomon of his age, James the First.

We have spoken of the supreme importance which is attached to rulers and government, as a prejudice; and we think, that something may be done towards abating the passion for power, by placing this thought in a clearer light. It seems to us not very difficult to show, that to govern men is not as high a sphere of action as has been commonly supposed, and that those, who have obtained this dignity, have usurped a place beyond their due in history and men's minds. We apprehend, indeed, that we are not alone in this opinion; that a change of sentiment on this subject has commenced and must go on; that men are learning, that there are higher sources of happiness and more important agents in human affairs than political rule. It is one mark of the progress of society, that it brings down the public man and raises the private one. It throws power into the hands of untitled individuals, and spreads it through all orders of the community. It multiplies and distributes freely means of extensive influence, and opens

Hosted by Google

new channels, by which the gifted mind, in whatever rank or condition, may communicate itself far and wide. Through the diffusion of education and printing, a private man may now speak to multitudes, incomparably more numerous than ancient or modern eloquence ever electrified in the popular assembly or the hall of legislation. By these instruments, truth is asserting her sovereignty over nations, without the help of rank, office, or sword ; and her faithful ministers will become more and more the lawgivers of the world.

We mean not to deny, we steadily affirm, that government is a great good, and essential to human happiness ; but it does its good chiefly by a negative influence, by repressing injustice and crime, by securing property from invasion, and thus removing obstructions to the free exercise of human powers. It confers little positive benefit. Its office is, not to confer happiness, but to give men opportunity to work out happiness for themselves. Government resembles the wall which surrounds our lands ; a needful protection, but rearing no harvests, ripening no fruits. It is the individual who must choose whether the enclosure shall be a paradise or a waste. How little positive good can government confer! It does not till our fields, build our houses, weave the ties which bind us to our families, give disinterestedness to the heart, or energy to the intellect and will. All our great interests are left to ourselves ; and governments, when they have interfered with them, have obstructed, much more than advanced them. For example, they have taken religion into their keeping only to disfigure it. So education, in their hands, has generally become a propagator of servile maxims, and an upholder of antiquated errors. In like

Hosted by Google

manner they have paralyzed trade by their nursing care, and multiplied poverty by expedients for its relief. Government has almost always been a barrier against which intellect has had to struggle; and society has made its chief progress by the minds of private individuals, who have outstripped their rulers, and gradually shamed them into truth and wisdom.

Virtue and intelligence are the great interests of a community, including all others, and worth all others; and the noblest agency is that by which they are advanced. Now we apprehend, that political power is not the most effectual instrument for their promotion, and accordingly we doubt whether government is the only or highest sphere for superior minds. Virtue, from its very nature, cannot be a product of what may be called the direct operation of government; that is, of legislation. Laws may repress crime. Their office is to erect prisons for violence and fraud. But moral and religious worth, dignity of character, loftiness of sentiment, all that makes man a blessing to himself and society, lies beyond their province. Virtue is of the soul, where laws cannot penetrate. Excellence is something too refined, spiritual, celestial, to be produced by the coarse machinery of government. Human legislation addresses itself to self-love, and works by outward force. Its chief instrument is punishment. It cannot touch the springs of virtuous feelings, of great and good deeds. Accordingly, rulers, with all their imagined omnipotence, do not dream of enjoining by statute, philanthropy, gratitude, devout sentiment, magnanimity, and purity of thought. Virtue is too high a concern for government. It is an inspiration of God, not a creature of law; and the agents whom God chiefly

Hosted by Google

honors in its promotion, are those, who, through experience as well as meditation, have risen to generous conceptions of it, and who show it forth, not in empty eulogies, but in the language of deep conviction, and in lives of purity.

Government, then, does little to advance the chief interest of human nature by its direct agency; and what shall we say of its indirect? Here we wish not to offend; but we must be allowed to use that plainness of speech which becomes Christians and freemen. We do fear then, that the indirect influence of government is on the whole adverse to virtue; and in saying this, we do not speak of other countries, or of different political institutions from our own. We do not mean to say, what all around us would echo, that monarchy corrupts a state, that the air of a court reeks with infection, and taints the higher classes with a licentiousness which descends to their inferiors. We speak of government at home; and we ask wise men to say, whether it ministers most to vice or virtue. We fear, that here, as elsewhere, political power is of corrupting tendency; and that, generally speaking, public men are not the most effectual teachers of truth, disinterestedness, and incorruptible integrity to the people. An error prevails in relation to political concerns, which necessarily makes civil institutions demoralizing. It is deeply rooted, the growth of ages. We refer to the belief, that public men are absolved in a measure from the everlasting and immutable obligations of morality; that political power is a prize, which justifies arts and compliances that would be scorned in private life; that management, intrigue, hollow pretensions, and appeals to base passions, deserve slight rebuke when

Hosted by Google

employed to compass political ends. Accordingly the laws of truth, justice, and philanthropy, have seldom been applied to public as to private concerns. Even those individuals, who have come to frown indignantly on the machinations, the office seeking, and the sacrifices to popularity, which disgrace our internal condition, are disposed to acquiesce in a crooked or ungenerous policy towards foreign nations, by which great advantages may accrue to their own country. Now the great truth, on which the cause of virtue rests, is, that rectitude is an eternal, unalterable, and universal law, binding at once heaven and earth, the perfection of God's character, and the harmony and happiness of the rational creation; and in proportion as political institutions unsettle this great conviction, — in proportion as they teach that truth, justice, and philanthropy are local, partial obligations, claiming homage from the weak, but shrinking before the powerful, — in proportion as they thus insult the awful and inviolable majesty of the Eternal Law, — in the same proportion they undermine the very foundation of a people's virtue.

In regard to the other great interest of the community, its intelligence, government may do much good by a direct influence; that is, by instituting schools or appropriating revenue for the instruction of the poorer classes. Whether it would do wisely in assuming to itself, or in taking from individuals, the provision and care of higher literary institutions, is a question not easily determined. But no one will doubt, that it is a noble function, to assist and develope the intellect in those classes of the community, whose hard condition exposes them to a merely animal existence. Still the agency of government in regard to knowledge is ne-

Hosted by Google

cessarily superficial and narrow. The great sources of intellectual power and progress to a people are its strong and original thinkers, be they found where they may. Government cannot, and does not, extend the bounds of knowledge; cannot make experiments in the laboratory, explore the laws of animal or vegetable nature, or establish the principles of criticism, morals, and religion. The energy, which is to carry forward the intellect of a people, belongs chiefly to private individuals, who devote themselves to lonely thought, who worship truth, who originate the views demanded by their age, who help us to throw off the yoke of established prejudices, who improve old modes of education or invent better. It is true that great men at the head of affairs may, and often do, contribute much to the growth of a nation's mind. But it too often happens that their station obstructs rather than aids their usefulness. Their connexion with a party, and the habit of viewing subjects in reference to personal aggrandizement, too often obscure the noblest intellects, and convert into patrons of narrow views and temporary interests, those, who, in other conditions, would have been the lights of their age, and the propagators of everlasting truth.—From these views of the limited influence of government on the most precious interests of society, we learn that political power is not the noblest power, and that, in the progress of intelligence, it will cease to be coveted as the chief and most honorable distinction on earth.

If we pass now to the consideration of that interest, over which government is expected chiefly to watch, and on which it is most competent to act with power, we shall not arrive at a result very different from what

Hosted by Google

we have just expressed. We refer to property, or wealth. That the influence of political institutions on this great concern is important, inestimable, we mean not to deny. But, as we have already suggested, it is chiefly negative. Government enriches a people by removing obstructions to their powers, by defending them from wrong, and thus giving them opportunity to enrich themselves. Government is not the spring of the wealth of nations, but their own sagacity, industry, enterprise, and force of character. To leave a people to themselves, is generally the best service their rulers can render. Time was, when sovereigns fixed prices and wages, regulated industry and expense, and imagined that a nation would starve and perish, if it were not guided and guarded like an infant. But we have learned, that men are their own best guardians, that property is safest under its owner's care, and that, generally speaking, even great enterprises can better be accomplished by the voluntary association of individuals, than by the state. Indeed, we are met at every stage of this discussion by the truth, that political power is a weak engine compared with *individual* intelligence, virtue and effort; and we are the more anxious to enforce this truth, because, through an extravagant estimate of government, men are apt to expect from it what they must do for themselves, and to throw upon it the blame which belongs to their own feebleness and improvidence. The great hope of society is individual character. Civilization and political institutions are themselves sources of not a few evils, which nothing but the intellectual and moral energy of the private citizen can avert or relieve. Such, for example, are the monstrous inequalities of property, the

Hosted by Google

sad contrasts of condition, which disfigure a large city; which laws create and cannot remove; which can only be mitigated and diminished by a principle of moral restraint in the poorer classes, and by a wise beneficence in the rich. The great lesson for men to learn is, that their happiness is in their own hands; that it is to be wrought out by their own faithfulness to God and conscience; that no outward institutions can supply the place of inward principle, of moral energy, whilst this can go far to supply the place of almost every outward aid.

Our remarks will show, that our estimate of political institutions is more moderate than the prevalent one, and that we regard the power, for which ambition has woven so many plots and shed so much blood, as destined to occupy a more and more narrow space, among the means of usefulness and distinction. There is, however, one branch of government, which we hold in high veneration, which we account an unspeakable blessing, and which, for the world, we would not say a word to disparage; and we are the more disposed to speak of it, because its relative importance seems to us little understood. We refer to the Judiciary, a department worth all others in the state. Whilst politicians expend their zeal on transient interests, which perhaps derive their chief importance from their connexion with a party, it is the province of the Judge to apply those solemn and universal laws of rectitude, on which the security, industry, and prosperity of the individual and the state essentially depend. From his tribunal, as from a sacred oracle, go forth the responses of justice. To us there is nothing in the whole fabric of civil institutions so interesting and imposing, as this impartial

Hosted by Google

and authoritative exposition of the principles of moral legislation. The administration of justice in this country, where the Judge, without a guard, without a soldier, without pomp, decides upon the dearest interests of the citizen, trusting chiefly to the moral sentiment of the community for the execution of his decrees, is the most beautiful and encouraging aspect, under which our government can be viewed. We repeat it, there is nothing in public affairs so venerable as the voice of Justice, speaking through her delegated ministers, reaching and subduing the high as well as the low, setting a defence around the splendid mansion of wealth and the lowly hut of poverty, repressing wrong, vindicating innocence, humbling the oppressor, and publishing the rights of human nature to every human being. We confess, that we often turn with pain and humiliation from the hall of Congress, where we see the legislator forgetting the majesty of his function, forgetting his relation to a vast and growing community, and sacrificing to his party or to himself the public weal; and it comforts us to turn to the court of justice, where the dispenser of the laws, shutting his ear against all solicitations of friendship or interest, dissolving for a time every private tie, forgetting public opinion, and withstanding public feeling, asks only what is RIGHT. To our courts, the resorts and refuge of weakness and innocence, we look with hope and joy. We boast, with a virtuous pride, that no breath of corruption has as yet tainted their pure air. To this department of government, we cannot ascribe too much importance. Over this, we cannot watch too jealously. Every encroachment on its independence we should resent, and repel, as the chief wrong our country can sustain.

Hosted by Google

Woe, woe to the impious hand, which would shake this most sacred and precious column of the social edifice.

In the remarks which we have now submitted to our readers, we have treated of great topics, if not worthily, yet, we trust, with a pure purpose. We have aimed to expose the passion for dominion, the desire of ruling mankind. We have labored to show the superiority of moral power and influence to that sway which has for ages been seized with eager and bloody hands. We have labored to hold up to unmeasured reprobation, him who would establish an empire of brute force over rational beings. We have labored to hold forth, as the enemy of his race, the man, who, in any way, would fetter the human mind, and subject other wills to his own. In a word, we have desired to awaken others and ourselves to a just self-reverence, to the free use and expansion of our highest powers, and especially to that moral force, that energy of holy, virtuous purpose, without which we are slaves amidst the freest institutions. Better gifts than these we cannot supplicate from God; nor can we consecrate our lives to nobler acquisitions.

Hosted by Google

REMARKS

ON THE CHARACTER AND WRITINGS

OF

FENELON.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF FENELON; with an Appendix, containing a Memoir of his Life. By a LADY. Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins. 1829.

WE perform a very gratifying duty, in introducing and recommending to our readers the book which stands at the head of this article. An attractive and quickening work on practical religion we regard as a valuable accession to our literature. Indeed any thing written with power on Christian morals and theology is most welcome. It is too true, and a sad truth, that religious books are preëminently dull. If we wished to impoverish a man's intellect, we could devise few means more effectual, than to confine him to what is called a course of theological reading. The very subject, to which, above all others, the writer should bring his whole strength of thought and feeling, which allies itself to our noblest faculties, to which reason, imagination, taste, and genius should consecrate their noblest efforts, is of all subjects treated most weakly, tamely,

Hosted by Google

and with least attraction. Of course there are splendid exceptions, but we speak of the immense majority of theological books. It is wonderful how men can think and write upon religion to so little effect. That a theme so vast, so sublime as Christianity, embracing God and man, earth and heaven, time and eternity, connected intimately with all human history, deriving lights from all human experience, admitting application to the whole of human life, and proposing as its great end the everlasting progress of the soul, — that such a subject should be treated so monotonously as to be proverbially dull, that its professed explorers should be able to plant their footsteps so exactly in the track of their predecessors, that the boundlessness of the field should so seldom tempt an adventurous spirit from the beaten way, is wonderful, and might seem a miracle to a man unacquainted with the vassalage which has broken down the mind in the department of religion. It is true, that those who write on this topic are accustomed to call it sublime; but they make its sublimity cold and barren, like that of mountain-tops wrapped in everlasting snows. We write this, not in severity, but in sorrow of heart; for we despair of any great progress of the human character or of society, until the energies of the mind shall be bent, as they seldom have been, on those most important subjects and interests of the human mind, morals and religion.

As a striking proof of the poverty of religious literature, and of the general barrenness of the intellect when employed in this field, we may refer to the small amount of original and productive thought in the English Church since the days of Barrow and Taylor. Could our voice be heard in England, we would ask impartial

Hosted by Google

and gifted men, more familiar with their country's history than ourselves, to solve the problem, how a Protestant Establishment, so munificently endowed with the means of improvement, should have done so little, in so long a period, for Christianity, should have produced so few books to interest the higher order of minds. Let not these remarks be misunderstood, as if we were wanting in respect and gratitude to a church, which, with all its defects, has been the bulwark of Protestantism, which has been illustrated by the piety and virtues of such men as Bishops Wilson, Berkeley, and Heber, and in which have sprung up so many institutions, consecrated to humanity, and to the diffusion of the Christian faith. We mean not to deny it the honor of having fostered talent in various forms and directions. Among the English clergy we find profound and elegant scholars; we find the names of those giants in ancient learning, Bentley and Parr, and a crowd of proficients in polite literature, of whom Hurd and Jortin are honorable representatives. We speak only of the deficiency of their contributions to moral and religious science. With the exception of Clarke and Butler, we could not easily name any of the Establishment, since the time above specified, who have decidedly carried forward the human intellect. The latter of these is indeed a great name, notwithstanding the alleged obscurities of his style, and worthy to be enrolled among the master-spirits of the human race. In regard to commentators, whose function, as commonly executed, holds a second rank in theology, the English Church, since the time of Hammond, has produced none of much value, except Bishop Pearce. We presume that she will not lay claim to the heretical

Hosted by Google

Locke, who carried into the interpretation of the Scriptures the same force of thought, as into the philosophy of the mind; or to Whitby, whose strenuous Arminianism, as Orthodoxy would reproachingly say, tapered off into that most suspicious form of Christianity, Unitarianism. We have not yet named two of the most illustrious intellectual chiefs of the church, Warburton and Horsley. Their great powers we most readily own; but Warburton is generally acknowledged to have wasted his mind, and has left no impression of himself on later times; whilst Horsley, though he has given us striking, if not judicious, sermons, in a style of unusual vigor, cannot be said to have communicated, in any respect, a new impulse to thought, and in Biblical criticism, to which he was zealously devoted, he is one of the last authorities on which a sound mind would lean. To Bishops Lowth and Sherlock we cheerfully acknowledge our obligations; and we question whether the latter has even yet received his due praise. We have not forgotten, though we have not named, Tillotson, Secker, and Porteus. They are all worthy of remembrance, especially Secker, the clear and wise expounder of Christian ethics; but they added little or nothing to the stock which they received. It may be thought, that we have not been just to the Establishment, in passing over Paley. He has our sincere admiration. On one great topic, which indeed has been worthily treated by many of the clergy, we mean that of Christian evidence, he has shed new light. By felicity of arrangement and illustration, he has given an air of novelty to old arguments, whilst he has strengthened his cause by important original proofs. His *Horæ Paulinæ* is one of the few books destined to live. Paley saw what he did

Hosted by Google

see, through an atmosphere of light. He seized on the strong points of his subject with an intuitive sagacity, and has given his clear, bright thoughts, in a style which has made them the property of his readers almost as perfectly as they were his own. In what then did he fail? We have said, that he was characterized by the distinctness of his vision. He was not, we think, equally remarkable for its extent. He was popular, rather than philosophical. He was deficient in that intellectual thirst, which is a chief element of the philosophical spirit. He had no irrepressible desire to sound the depths of his own nature, or to ascend to wide and all-reconciling views of the works and ways of God. Moral philosophy he carried backward; nor had he higher claims in religious, than in ethical science. His sermons are worthy of all praise, not indeed for their power over the heart, but for their plain and strong expositions of duty, and their awakening appeals to the conscience.

We leave this topic with observing, that, in the noblest branch of history, we mean Christian or ecclesiastical history, the English Church has not furnished a single distinguished name. We have one mournful and decisive proof of this deficiency. The vast majority of English readers learn what they know of the progress and fortunes of their religion, from its foe and insulter, from Gibbon, the apostle of unbelief. The history of Christianity, the most important and sublime theme in this province of literature, has as yet found no writer to do it justice, none to be compared with the great names in civil history. The mightiest revolution in the records of our race remains to be worthily told. We doubt, indeed, whether the true character, style,

Hosted by Google

and extent of the work which is needed, are as yet comprehended. That the same rigorous impartiality, the same spirit of philosophical research into causes and effects, is to be carried into religious as into civil history, is imperfectly understood. The records of particular sects and churches, instead of exhausting this great subject, are perhaps subordinate parts. We want to know the great conflict between Christianity and Heathenism, and the action and reaction of these systems on one another. We want to know the influences of Christianity on society, politics, manners, philosophy, and literature, and the modifications which it has received in return from all these mighty agents. We know not where history can find a nobler field for its graphic powers, than in the chivalrous ages of Christianity; nor can it find, in its whole range over the past, a subject so fitted, as the spread and fortunes of this religion, to its great end, which is, to throw light on the nature and powers of man, and to carry us deep into the human soul. When is this greatest and most lamentable chasm in our literature to be supplied?

We have cited the English Church as a proof of the unproductiveness of the intellect in religion, and of the barrenness of theological literature. Had we time we might find corroborations in other sects. In truth, a paralyzing influence has been working mightily for ages in the Christian world, and we ought not to wonder at its results. Free action has been denied to the mind, and freedom is an essential condition of growth and power. A fettered limb moves slowly and operates feebly. The spirit pines away in a prison; and yet to rear prison-walls round the mind has been the chief toil of ages. The mischiefs of this intellectual bond

Hosted by Google

age are as yet, we conceive, but imperfectly known, and need to be set forth with a new eloquence. If, as we believe, progress be the supreme law of the soul and the very aim of its creation, then no wrong can be inflicted on it so grievous, as to bind it down everlastingly to a fixed, unvarying creed, especially if this creed was framed in an age of darkness, crime, and political and religious strife. This tyranny is pre-eminently treason against human nature. If growth be the supreme law and purpose of the mind, then the very truth, which was suited to one age, may, if made the limit of future ones, become a positive evil; just as the garment, in which childhood sports with ease and joy, would irritate and deform the enlarging frame. God, having framed the soul for expansion, has placed it in the midst of an unlimited universe to receive fresh impulses and impressions without end; and man, "dressed in a little brief authority," would sever it from this sublime connexion, and would shape it after his own ignorance or narrow views. The effects are as necessary as they are mournful. The mind, in proportion as it is cut off from free communication with nature, with revelation, with God, with itself, loses its life, just as the body droops, when debarred from the fresh air and the cheering light of heaven. Its vision is contracted, its energies blighted, its movement constrained. It finds health only in action. It is perfect, only in as far as it is self-formed. — Let us not be misapprehended. We mean not to deny that the mind needs the aid of human instruction, from the cradle to the grave; but this it needs as a material to act upon, and not as a lesson to be mechanically learned. The great aim of instruction should be to give the mind the

Hosted by Google

consciousness and free use of its own powers. The less of instruction the better, if it only propose to engender a slavish dependence and an inert faith. The soul often owes its best acquisitions to itself. They come to it from glimpses of its own nature which it cannot trace to human teaching, from the whispers of a divine voice, from stirrings and aspirations of its own unfolding and unbounded energies, from the indistinct dawning of new truths, or from the sudden brightening of old truths, which, if left to act freely, work a mighty revolution within. Against these inspirations, if so they may be called, which belong to the individual, and which are perpetually bursting the limits of received ideas, the spirit of religious tyranny wages its chief and most unrelenting war. It dreads nothing so much as a mind, in which these diviner motions manifest themselves in power. That it should have so succeeded in checking and stifling them, is one of the very mournful reflections forced on us by human history. We have here one great cause of the sterility of theological literature. Religion, by being imposed as a yoke, has subdued the faculties, which it was meant to quicken; and, what is most worthy of remark, like all other yokes, it has often excited a mad resistance, which has sought compensation for past restraints in licentiousness, and disgraced the holy name of freedom, by attaching it to impiety and shameless excess.

A great subject has led us far from our author. We return to him with pleasure. We welcome, as we have said, a book from Fenelon; and we do so, because, if not a profound, he was an original thinker, and because, though a Catholic, he was essentially free. He wrote from his own mind, and seldom has a purer mind taber-

Hosted by Google

nacled in flesh. He professed to believe in an infallible church; but he listened habitually to the voice of God within him, and speaks of this in language so strong, as to have given the Quakers some plea for ranking him among themselves. So little did he confine himself to established notions, that he drew upon himself the censures of his church, and, like some other Christians whom we could name, has even been charged with a refined Deism. His works have the great charm of coming fresh from the soul. He wrote from experience, and hence, though he often speaks a language which must seem almost a foreign one to men of the world, yet he always speaks in a tone of reality. That he has excesses we mean not to deny; but they are of a kind which we regard with more than indulgence, almost with admiration. Common fanaticism we cannot away with; for it is essentially vulgar, the working of animal passions, sometimes of sexual love, and oftener of earthly ambition. But when a pure mind errs, by aspiring after a disinterestedness and purity not granted to our present infant state, we almost reverence its errors; and still more, we recognise in them an essential truth. They only anticipate and claim too speedily the good for which man was made. They are the misapprehensions of the inspired prophet, who hopes to see in his own day, what he was appointed to promise to remoter ages.

Fenelon saw far into the human heart, and especially into the lurkings of self-love. He looked with a piercing eye through the disguises of sin. But he knew sin, not, as most men do, by bitter experience of its power, so much as by his knowledge and experience of virtue. Deformity was revealed to him by his refined percep-

Hosted by Google

tions and intense love of moral beauty. The light, which he carried with him into the dark corners of the human heart, and by which he laid open its most hidden guilt, was that of celestial goodness. Hence, though the severest of censors, he is the most pitying. Not a tone of asperity escapes him. He looks on human error with an angel's tenderness, with tears which an angel might shed, and thus reconciles and binds us to our race, at the very moment of revealing its corruptions.

That Fenelon's views of human nature were dark, too dark, we learn from almost every page of his writings; and at this we cannot wonder. He was early thrown into the very court, from which Rochefoucauld drew his celebrated Maxims, perhaps the spot, above all others on the face of the earth, distinguished and disgraced by selfishness, hypocrisy, and intrigue. When we think of Fenelon in the palace of Louis the Fourteenth, it reminds us of a seraph sent on a divine commission into the abodes of the lost; and when we recollect, that in that atmosphere he composed his Telemachus, we doubt whether the records of the world furnish stronger evidence of the power of a divine virtue, to turn temptation into glory and strength, and to make even crowned and prosperous vice a means of triumph and exaltation. — Another cause of Fenelon's unjust views of human life may be found, we think, in his profession. All professions tend to narrow and obscure the intellect, and none more than that of a priest. We know not indeed a nobler or more useful function than that of the Christian minister; but superstitious notions and an imagined sanctity have severed him

Hosted by Google

more or less from his race, especially in a church which dooms him to celibacy, and from this unnatural, insulated position, it is impossible for him to judge justly of his kind. — We think, too, that Fenelon was led astray by a very common error of exalted minds. He applied too rigorous and unvarying a standard to the multitude. He leaned to the error of expecting the strength of manhood in the child, the harvest in seed-time. On this subject, above all others, we feel that we should speak cautiously. We know that there is a lenity towards human deficiencies full of danger; but there is, too, a severity far more common, and perhaps more ruinous. Human nature, as ordinarily exhibited, merits rebuke; but whoever considers the sore trials, the thick darkness, the impetuous will, the strong passions, under which man commences his moral probation, will temper rebuke with pity and hope. There is a wisdom, perhaps the rarest and sublimest attainment of the intellect, which is at once liberal and severe, indulgent and unbending; which makes merciful and equitable allowance for the innocent infirmities, the necessary errors, the obstructions and temptations of human beings, and at the same time asserts the majesty of virtue, strengthens the sense of accountableness, binds on us self-denial, and points upward, with a never-ceasing importunity, to moral perfection, as the great aim and only happiness of the human soul. We will not say that Fenelon was a stranger to this broad, comprehensive wisdom, but we cannot name it as his chief distinction.

We have said, that we welcome the book under consideration, because it came from so pure and gifted a mind. We add, that we do not welcome it the less for coming from a Catholic. Perhaps we prize it the

Hosted by Google

more; for we wish that Protestantism may grow wiser and more tolerant, and we know not a better teacher of these lessons than the character of Fenelon. Such a man is enough to place within the pale of our charity, the whole body to which he belonged. His virtue is broad enough to shield his whole church from that unmeasured, undistinguishing reprobation, with which Protestant zeal has too often assailed it. Whoever remembers, that the Catholic communion numbers in its ranks more than one hundred millions of souls, probably more than all other Christian churches together, must shudder at the sentence of proscription, which has sometimes been passed on this immense portion of human beings. It is time that greater justice were done to this ancient and wide-spread community. The Catholic Church has produced some of the greatest and best men that ever lived, and this is proof enough of its possessing all the means of salvation. Who, that hears the tone of contempt, in which it is sometimes named, would suspect that Charlemagne, Alfred, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Tasso, Bossuet, Pascal, Des Cartes, were Catholics? Some of the greatest names in arts and arms, on the throne and in the pulpit, were worn by Catholics. To come down to our own times, has not the metropolis of New England witnessed a sublime example of Christian virtue in a Catholic bishop? Who, among our religious teachers, would solicit a comparison between himself and the devoted Cheverus? This good man, whose virtues and talents have now raised him to high dignities in church and state, who now wears in his own country the joint honors of an archbishop and a peer, lived in the midst of us, devoting his days and nights, and his whole heart, to the

Hosted by Google

service of a poor and uneducated congregation. We saw him declining, in a great degree, the society of the cultivated and refined, that he might be the friend of the ignorant and friendless; leaving the circles of polished life, which he would have graced, for the meanest hovels; bearing, with a father's sympathy, the burdens and sorrows of his large spiritual family; charging himself alike with their temporal and spiritual concerns; and never discovering, by the faintest indication, that he felt his fine mind degraded by his seemingly humble office. This good man, bent on his errands of mercy, was seen in our streets under the most burning sun of summer, and the fiercest storms of winter, as if armed against the elements by the power of charity. He has left us, but not to be forgotten. He enjoys among us what to such a man must be dearer than fame. His name is cherished where the great of this world are unknown. It is pronounced with blessings, with grateful tears, with sighs for his return, in many an abode of sorrow and want; and how can we shut our hearts against this proof of the power of the Catholic religion to form good and great men?

These remarks, we trust, will not be perverted. None will suspect us of Catholic partialities. Of all Protestants, we have fewest sympathies with the Romish Church. We go farther than our brethren, in rejecting her mysteries, those monuments of human weakness; and as to her claims to infallibility, we repel them with an indignation not to be understood by sects, which, calling themselves Protestant, renounce in words, but assert in practice, a Popish immunity from error, a Popish control over the faith of their brethren. To us, the spiritual tyranny of Popery is as detestable as

Hosted by Google

Oriental despotism. When we look back on the history of Papal Rome, we see her, in the days of her power, stained with the blood of martyrs, gorged with rapine, drunk with luxury and crime. But what then? Is it righteous to involve a whole church in guilt, which, after all, belongs to a powerful few? Is it righteous to forget, that Protestantism too has blood on her robes? Is it righteous to forget, that Time, the greatest of reformers, has exerted his silent, purifying power on the Catholic as well as on ourselves? Shall we refuse to see, and to own with joy, that Christianity, even under Papal corruptions, puts forth a divine power? that men cannot wholly spoil it of its celestial efficacy? that, even under its most disastrous eclipse, it still sheds beams to guide the soul to heaven? that there exists in human nature, when loyal to conscience, a power to neutralize error, and to select and incorporate with itself what is pure and ennobling in the most incongruous system? Shall we shut our eyes on the fact, that among the clergy of the Romish Church have risen up illustrious imitators of that magnanimous Apostle, before whom Felix trembled; men, who, in the presence of nobles and kings, have bowed to God alone, have challenged for his law uncompromising homage, and rebuked, in virtue's own undaunted tone, triumphant guilt? Shall we shut our eyes on the fact, that, from the bosom of this corrupt church, have gone forth missionaries to the east and the west, whose toils and martyrdom will not be dimmed by comparison with what is most splendid in Protestant self-sacrifice? We repeat it, not boastingly, but from deep conviction, that we are exceeded by no sect in earnestness of desire for the subversion of the usurped power of the

Hosted by Google

Catholic Church, of its false doctrines, and of its childish ceremonies so often substituted for inward virtue. We believe that these have wrought, and still work, great evil. Still we see, and delight to see, among those who adhere to them, the best attributes of men and Christians. Still we are accustomed to refresh our piety by books which Catholics have written. Still we find one of our highest gratifications in those works of art, in which Catholic genius has embodied its sublime and touching conceptions of the form and countenance of Jesus, has made us awed witnesses of his miracles and cross, companions of his apostles, and admirers, with a tender reverence, of the meek, celestial beauty of his sainted mother. With these impressions, and this experience, we cannot but lift up our voices against Protestant as well as Papal intolerance. We would purify Protestantism from the worst stain and crime of Rome, her cruel bigotry, her nefarious spirit of exclusion.

It would give us pleasure to enlarge on the character of Fenelon, had we not proposed to ourselves another and still more important object in this review. But, in truth, this grateful duty has been so faithfully performed in the Memoir added to the Selections, that our readers will have no cause to complain of our declining it. This sketch of Fenelon overflows with fervent yet discriminating admiration, and gives utterance to affectionate reverence, with a calmness which wins our confidence. It is not easy to make extracts where the whole is so interesting. But as some of our readers may know Fenelon only by name, and as we wish all to know and love him, we insert a few passages.

Hosted by Google

"Fenelon, by mixing with all ranks and conditions, by associating with the unfortunate and the sorrowful, by assisting the weak, and by that union of mildness, of energy, and of benevolence, which adapts itself to every character, and to every situation, acquired the knowledge of the moral and physical ills which afflict human nature. It was by this habitual and immediate communication with all classes of society, that he obtained the melancholy conviction of the miseries which distress the greater part of mankind; and to the profound impression of this truth, through his whole life, we must ascribe that tender commiseration for the unfortunate, which he manifests in all his writings, and which he displayed still more powerfully in all his actions."—*pp.* 263, 264.

"In the course of his walks, he would often join the peasants, sit down with them on the grass, talk with them, and console them. He visited them in their cottages, seated himself at table with them, and partook of their humble meals. By such kindness and familiarity, he won their affections, and gained access to their minds. As they loved him as a father and friend, they delighted to listen to his instructions, and to submit to his guidance. Long after his death, the old people who had the happiness of seeing him on these occasions, spoke of him with the most tender reverence. 'There,' they would say, 'is the chair on which our good Archbishop used to sit in the midst of us; we shall see him no more,' and then their tears would flow.

"The diocese of Cambrai was often the theatre of war, and experienced the cruel ravages of retreating and conquering armies. But an extraordinary respect was paid to Fenelon by the invaders of France. The English, the Germans, and the Dutch rivalled the inhabitants of Cambrai in their veneration for the Archbishop. All distinctions of religion and sect, all feelings of hatred and jealousy that divided the nations, seemed to disappear in the presence of Fenelon. Military escorts were offered him, for his personal security, but these he declined, and traversed the countries desolated by war, to visit his flock, trusting in the protection of God. In these visits, his way was marked by alms and benefactions. While he was among them, the people seemed to enjoy peace in the midst of war.

Hosted by Google

"He brought together into his palace the wretched inhabitants of the country, whom the war had driven from their homes, and took care of them, and fed them at his own table. Seeing one day that one of these peasants ate nothing, he asked him the reason of his abstinence. 'Alas! my Lord,' said the poor man, 'in making my escape from my cottage, I had not time to bring off my cow, which was the support of my family. The enemy will drive her away, and I shall never find another so good.' Fenelon, availing himself of his privilege of safe conduct, immediately set out accompanied by a single servant, and drove the cow back himself to the peasant.

"'This,' said Cardinal Maury, 'is perhaps the finest act of Fenelon's life.' He adds, 'Alas! for the man who reads it without being affected.' Another anecdote, showing his tenderness to the poor, is thus related of him. A literary man, whose library was destroyed by fire, has been deservedly admired for saying, 'I should have profited but little by my books, if they had not taught me how to bear the loss of them.' The remark of Fenelon, who lost his in a similar way, is still more simple and touching. 'I would much rather they were burned, than the cottage of a poor peasant.'

"The virtues of Fenelon give his history the air of romance; but his name will never die. Transports of joy were heard at Cambrai when his ashes were discovered, which, it was thought, had been scattered by the tempest of the Revolution; and to this moment the Flemings call him 'The Good Archbishop.'"—*pp.* 274, 275.

The Memoir closes in this touching strain;—

"When we speak of the death of Fenelon, we realize the truth of what we all acknowledge, though few feel, that the good man never dies; that, to use the words of one of our eloquent divines, 'death was but a circumstance in his being.' We may say, as we read his writings, that we are conscious of his immortality; he is with us; his spirit is around us; it enters into and takes possession of our souls. He is at this time, as he was when living in his diocese, the familiar friend of the poor and the sorrowful, the bold reprover of vice, and the gentle guide of the wanderer; he still says to all, in the words of his Divine Master, 'Come to me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Hosted by Google

"In the houses of the unlearned, where the names of Louis the Fourteenth and Bossuet have never entered, except as connected with Fenelon's, where not a word of his native tongue would be understood, his spirit has entered as a minister of love and wisdom, and a well-worn translation of his 'Reflections,' with a short Memoir of his life, is laid upon the precious word of God. What has thus immortalized Fenelon? For what is he thus cherished in our hearts? Is it his learning? his celebrity? his eloquence? No. It is the spirit of Christian love, the spirit of the Saviour of mankind, that is poured forth from all his writings; of that love that conquers self, that binds us to our neighbour, that raises us to God. This is Fenelon's power, it is this that touches our souls. We feel that he has entered into the full meaning of that sublime passage in St. John, and made it the motto of his life. 'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."—*pp.* 282, 283.

The translator has received and will receive the thanks of many readers for giving them an opportunity of holding communion with the mind of Fenelon. Her selections are judicious, and she has caught much of that simplicity which is the charm of Fenelon's style. A want of coherence in the thoughts may sometimes be observed; and this, we suppose, is to be ascribed in part to the author, whose writings seem to be natural breathings of the soul, rather than elaborate works of art; but still more to the translator, whose delicate task of selecting only what would suit and edify the Protestant mind, must have compelled her to make omissions and sudden transitions, not very favorable to order and connexion.

We now come to our principal object. We propose to examine the most distinguishing views, or system of

Hosted by Google

Fenelon. We say, his "system," for, though he seems to write from immediate impulse, his works possess that unity which belongs to the productions of all superior minds. However he may appear to give his thoughts without elaboration or method, yet one spirit pervades them. We hear everywhere the same mild and penetrating voice, and feel ourselves always in the presence of the same strongly marked mind. What then were Fenelon's most characteristic views? — It may be well to observe, that our principal aim in this inquiry, is, to secure our readers against what we deem exceptionable in his system. We believe, as we have said, that he is not free from excess. He is sometimes unguarded, sometimes extravagant. He needs to be read with caution, as do all who write from their own deeply excited minds. He needs to be received with deductions and explanations; and to furnish these is our present aim. We fear that the very excellences of Fenelon may shield his errors. Admiration prepares the mind for belief; and the moral and religious sensibility of the reader may lay him open to impressions, which, whilst they leave his purity unstained, may engender causeless solicitudes, and repress a just and cheerful interest in the ordinary pleasures and labors of life.

What then are Fenelon's characteristic views? We begin with his views of God, which very much determine and color a religious system; and these are simple and affecting. He seems to regard God but in one light, to think of him but in one character. God always comes to him as the father, as the pitying and purifying friend, of the soul. This spiritual relation of the Supreme Being is, in the book before us, his

Hosted by Google

all-comprehending, all-absorbing attribute. Our author constantly sets before us God as dwelling in the human mind, and dwelling there, to reprove its guilt, to speak to it with a still voice, to kindle a celestial ray in its darkness, to distil upon it his grace, to call forth its love towards himself, and to bow it, by a gentle, rational sway, to chosen, cheerful, entire subjection to his pure and righteous will. Fenelon had fully received the Christian doctrine of God. He believed in him as the Universal Father, as loving every soul, loving the guiltiest soul, and striving with it to reclaim it to himself. This interest of the Creator in the lost and darkened mind, is the thought which predominates in the writings of this excellent man. God's care of the outward world, of men's outward interests, of the concerns of nations, seems scarcely to enter his mind. It is of God, present to the soul, as a reprover, enlightener, purifier, and guide to perfection, that he loves to speak, and he speaks with a depth of conviction and tenderness, to which, one would think, every reader must respond.

We have seen the predominant view of the Supreme Being in the writings which we are examining. He is a spiritual father, seeking the perfection of every soul which he has made.—Another great question, carrying us still more deeply into Fenelon's mind, now presents itself. In what did he suppose this perfection of the human soul to consist? His views on this subject may be expressed in two words, self-crucifixion and love to God. Through these human perfection is to be sought. In these, and especially in the last, it consists. According to Fenelon, we are placed between two mighty attractions, self and God; and the only important ques-

Hosted by Google

tion for every human being is, to which of these hostile powers he will determine or surrender his mind? His phraseology on this subject is various, and indeed his writings are, in a great measure, expansions of this single view. He lays open the perpetual collisions between the principle of selfishness and the principle of religious love, and calls us with his whole strength of persuasion, to sacrifice the first, to cherish and enthrone the last. This is his great aim. This he urges in a diversity of forms, some of which may be repeated, as helps to a better apprehension of his doctrine. Thus he calls us "to die to ourselves and to live to God;" — "to renounce our own wills and to choose the will of God as our only rule;" — "to renounce our own glory and to seek the glory of God;" — "to distrust ourselves and to put our whole trust in God;" — "to forget ourselves and to give our thoughts to God;" — "to renounce ease and to labor for God;" — "to sacrifice pleasure and to suffer for God;" — "to silence our own passions and to listen to the voice of God;" — "to crucify self-love and to substitute for it the love of God;" — "to surrender our plans and to leave all things to God." These passages give us Fenelon's theory of perfection. Self, as he teaches, is the great barrier between the soul and its Maker, and self is to vanish more and more from our thoughts, desires, hopes, trust, and complacency, and God to become all in all. Our own interests, pleasures, plans, advancement, all are to be swallowed up in an entire and unreserved devotion to the will of God.

Such is the doctrine of Fenelon, and it is essentially just. Self-crucifixion or self-sacrifice, and love to God, including love to his creatures, are the chief elements

Hosted by Google

of moral perfection. The pure and noble mind of Fen elon recognised as by instinct, and separated from all inferior adjuncts, these essential constituents or attributes of Christian virtue; and there are passages in which he sets before us their deep and silent workings in the heart, and their beautiful manifestations in the life, with a delicacy, power, and truth, which can hardly be surpassed.

Still we think that Fenelon's exposition of his views is open to objection. We think that his phraseology, notwithstanding its apparent simplicity, is often obscure; that he has not set the due bounds to his doctrines; and especially that refined minds, thirsting for perfection, may be led astray by his peculiar mode of exhibiting it. Our objections we will now state more fully.

We have said that self-crucifixion and love to God are, in Fenelon's system, the two chief constituents or elements of virtue and perfection. To these we will give separate attention, although in truth they often coalesce, and always imply one another. We begin with self-crucifixion, or what is often called self-sacrifice, and on this we chiefly differ from the expositions of our author. Perhaps the word *self* occurs more frequently than any other in Fenelon's writings, and he is particularly inclined to place it in contrast with and in opposition to God. According to his common teaching, God and self are hostile influences, having nothing in common; the one, the concentration of all evil, the other of all good. Self is the principle and the seat of all guilt and misery. He is never weary of pouring reproach on self, and, generally speaking, sets no limits to the duty of putting it to a painful death. Now language like this has led men to very injurious modes of

Hosted by Google

regarding themselves and their own nature, and made them forgetful of what they owe to themselves. It has thrown a cloud over man's condition and prospects. It has led to self-contempt, a vice as pernicious as pride. A man, when told perpetually to crucify *himself*, is apt to include under this word his whole nature, and we fear that, under this teaching, our nature is repressed, its growth stinted, its free movements chained, and of course its beauty, grace, and power impaired. We mean not to charge on Fenelon the error of which we have spoken, or to hold him responsible for its effects. But we do think that it finds shelter under his phraseology, and we deem it so great, so pernicious, as to need a faithful exposition. Men err in nothing more than in disparaging and wronging their own nature. None are just to themselves. The truth on this great subject is indeed so obscured, that it may startle as a paradox. A human being, justly viewed, instead of being bound to general self-crucifixion, cannot reverence and cherish himself too much. This position, we know, is strong. But strong language is needed to encounter strong delusion. We would teach, that great limitations must be set to the duty of renouncing or denying ourselves, and that no self-crucifixion is virtuous, but that which concurs with, and promotes, self-respect. We will unfold our meaning, beginning with positions, which we presume will be controverted by none.

If we first regard man's highest nature, we shall see at once, that to crucify or renounce this, so far from being a duty, would be a crime. The mind, which is our chief distinction, can never be spoken or thought of too reverently. It is God's highest work, his mirror

Hosted by Google

and representative. Its superiority to the outward universe is mournfully overlooked, and is yet most true. This preëminence we ascribe to the mind, not merely because it can comprehend the universe which cannot comprehend itself, but for still higher reasons. We believe, that the human mind is akin to that intellectual energy which gave birth to nature, and consequently that it contains within itself the seminal and prolific principles from which nature sprung. We believe, too, that the highest purpose of the universe is to furnish materials, scope, and excitements to the mind, in the work of assimilating itself to the Infinite Spirit; that is, to minister to a progress within us, which nothing without us can rival. So transcendent is the mind. No praise can equal God's goodness in creating us after his own spiritual likeness. No imagination can conceive of the greatness of the gift of a rational and moral existence. Far from crucifying this, to unfold it must ever be the chief duty and end of our being, and the noblest tribute we can render to its Author.

We have spoken of the mind, that highest part of ourselves, and of the guilt we should incur by crucifying or renouncing it. But the duty of self-crucifixion requires still greater limitations. Taking human nature as consisting of a body as well as mind, as including animal desire, as framed to receive pleasure through the eye and ear and all the organs of sense, in this larger view, we cannot give it up to the immolation which is sometimes urged. We see in the mixed constitution of man a beautiful whole. We see in the lowest as well as highest capacity an important use; and in every sense an inlet of pleasure not to be disdained. Still more, we believe, that he, in whom the

Hosted by Google

physical nature is unfolded most entirely and harmoniously, who unites to greatest strength of limbs the greatest acuteness of the senses, may, if he will, derive important aids to the intellect and moral powers from these felicities of his outward frame. We believe, too, that, by a beautiful reaction, the mind, in proportion to its culture and moral elevation, gives vigor and grace to the body, and enlarges its sphere of action and enjoyment. Thus, human nature, viewed as a whole, as a union of the worlds of matter and mind, is a work worthy of a divine author, and its universal developement, not its general crucifixion, is the lesson of wisdom and virtue.

We go still farther. The desire of our own individual interest, pleasure, good, the principle which is ordinarily denominated self-love or self-regard, is not to be warred against and destroyed. The tendency of this to excess is indeed our chief moral danger. Self-partiality, in some form or other, enters into and constitutes chiefly, if not wholly, every sin. But excess is not essential to self-regard, and this principle of our nature is the last which could be spared. Nothing is plainer than that to every being his own welfare is more specially committed than that of any other, and that a special sensibility to it is imperiously demanded by his present state. He alone knows his own wants and perils, and the hourly, perpetual claims of his particular lot; and were he to discard the care of himself for a day, he would inevitably perish. It is a remark of great importance, that the moral danger, to which we are exposed by self-love, arises from the very indispensableness of this principle, from the necessity of its perpetual exercise; for, according to a known law

Hosted by Google

of the mind, every passion, unless carefully restrained, gains strength by frequency of excitement and action. The tendency of self-love to excess results from its very importance, or from the need in which we stand of its unceasing agency, and is therefore no reason for its extermination, and no reproach on human nature. This tendency, however, does exist. It is strong. It is fearful. It is our chief peril. It is the precipice, on the edge of which we always tread. It is the great appointed trial of our moral nature. To this tendency, unresisted, tamely obeyed, we owe the chief guilt and misery of the present state, the extinction of charity, a moral death more terrible than all the calamities of life. This truth Fenelon felt and taught as few have done, and in his powerful warnings against this peril the chief value of his writings lies. He treats with admirable acuteness the windings of self-partiality, shows how it mixes with the best motives, and how it feeds upon, and so consumes, our very virtues. All this is true. Still, self-love is an essential part of our nature, and must not and cannot be renounced.

The strong tendency of this principle to excess, of which we have now spoken, explains the strong language, in which Fenelon and others have pointed out our danger from this part of our constitution. But it has also given rise to exaggerated views and modes of expression, which have contributed, perhaps, as much as any cause, to the universal want of a just self-respect. Self-love, from its proneness to excess and its constant movements, has naturally been the object of greater attention than any other principle of action; and men, regarding it not so much in its ordinary operations as in its encroachments and its triumphs over other senti-

Hosted by Google

ments, have come to consider it as the chief constituent of human nature. Philosophers, "falsely so called," have labored to resolve into it all our affections, to make it the sole spring of life, so that the whole mind, according to their doctrine, may be considered as one energy of self-love. If to these remarks we add, that this principle, as its name imports, has self or the individual for its object, we have the explanation of a very important fact in the present discussion. We learn how it is, that self-love has come to be called by the name of *self*, as if it constituted the whole individual, and to be considered as entering into and forming human nature as no other principle does. A man's self-love, especially when unrestrained, is thus thought to be and is spoken of as himself; and hence the duty of crucifying or renouncing himself has naturally been urged by Fenelon, and a host of writers, in the broadest and most unqualified terms.

Now it is not true that self-love is our only principle, or that it constitutes ourselves any more than other principles, and the wrong done to our nature by such modes of speech needs to be resisted. Our nature has other elements or constituents, and vastly higher ones, to which self-love was meant to minister, and which are at war with its excesses. For example, we have reason, or intellectual energy, given us for the pursuit and acquisition of truth; and this is essentially a disinterested principle; for truth, which is its object, is of a universal, impartial nature. The great province of the intellectual faculty is, to acquaint the individual with the laws and order of the divine system; a system, which spreads infinitely beyond himself, of which he forms a very small part, which embraces innumerable beings equally fa-

Hosted by Google

vored by God, and which proposes as its sublime and beneficent end, the ever-growing good of the whole. Again, human nature has a variety of affections, corresponding to our domestic and most common relations; affections, which in multitudes overpower self-love, which make others the chief objects of our care, which nerve the arm for ever-recurring toil by day, and strengthen the wearied frame to forego the slumbers of night. Then there belongs to every man the general sentiment of humanity, which responds to all human sufferings, to a stranger's tears and groans, and often prompts to great sacrifices for his relief. Above all there is the moral principle, that which should especially be called a man's self, for it is clothed with a kingly authority over his whole nature, and was plainly given to bear sway over every desire. This is eminently a disinterested principle. Its very essence is impartiality. It has no respect of persons. It is the principle of justice, taking the rights of all under its protection, and frowning on the least wrong, however largely it may serve ourselves. This moral nature especially delights in, and enjoins, a universal charity, and makes the heart thrill with exulting joy, at the sight or hearing of magnanimous deeds, of perils fronted, and death endured, in the cause of humanity. Now these various principles, and especially the last, are as truly ourselves as self-love. When a man thinks of himself, these ought to occur to him as his chief attributes. He can hardly injure himself more, than by excluding these from his conception of himself, and by making self-love the great constituent of his nature.

We have urged these remarks on the narrow sense often given to the word *self*, because we are persuaded,

Hosted by Google

that it leads to degrading ideas of human nature, and to the pernicious notion, that we practise a virtuous self-sacrifice in holding it in contempt. We would have it understood, that high faculties form this despised self, as truly as low desires; and we would add, that, when these are faithfully unfolded, this self takes rank among the noblest beings in the universe. To illustrate this thought, we ask the reader's attention to an important, but much neglected view of virtue and religion. These are commonly spoken of in an abstract manner, as if they were distinct from ourselves, as if they were foreign existences, which enter the human mind, and dwell there in a kind of separation from itself. Now religion and virtue, wherever they exist, are the mind itself, and nothing else. They are human nature, and nothing else. A good man's piety and virtue are not distinct possessions; they are himself, and all the glory which belongs to them belongs to himself. What is religion? Not a foreign inhabitant, not something alien to our nature, which comes and takes up its abode in the soul. It is the soul itself, lifting itself up to its Maker. What is virtue? It is the soul, listening to, and revering, and obeying a law which belongs to its very essence, the law of duty. We sometimes smile, when we hear men decrying human nature, and in the same breathing exalting religion to the skies; as if religion were any thing more than human nature, acting in obedience to its chief law. Religion and virtue, as far as we possess them, are ourselves; and the homage which is paid to these attributes, is in truth a tribute to the soul of man. Self-crucifixion then, should it exclude self-reverence, would be any thing but virtue.

We would briefly suggest another train of thought

Hosted by Google

leading to the same result. Self-crucifixion, or self-renunciation, is a work, and a work requires an agent. By whom then is it accomplished? We answer, by the man himself, who is the subject of it. It is he who is summoned to the effort. He is called by a voice within, and by the law of God, to put forth power over himself, to rule his own spirit, to subdue every passion. Now this inward power, which self-crucifixion supposes and demands, is the most signal proof of a high nature which can be given. It is the most illustrious power which God confers. It is a sovereignty worth more than that over outward nature. It is the chief constituent of the noblest order of virtues; and its greatness, of course, demonstrates the greatness of the human mind, which is perpetually bound and summoned to put it forth. But this is not all. Self-crucifixion has an object, an end; and what is it? Its great end is, to give liberty and energy to our nature. Its aim is, not to break down the soul, but to curb those lusts and passions, "which war against the soul," that the moral and intellectual faculties may rise into new life, and may manifest their divine original. Self-crucifixion, justly viewed, is the suppression of the passions, that the power and progress of thought, and conscience, and pure love, may be unrestrained. It is the destruction of the brute, that the angel may unfold itself within. It is founded on our godlike capacities, and the expansion and glory of these is its end. Thus the very duty, which by some is identified with self-contempt, implies and imposes self-reverence. It is the belief and the choice of perfection as our inheritance and our end.

We have thus shown under what great limitations,

Hosted by Google

self-crucifixion, or self-renunciation, is to be understood, and how remote it is from self-contempt. Our purpose was, after closing this discussion, to give a rational interpretation of the phrases in which Fenelon has enjoined this duty. But our limits allow us just to glance at one or two of these. Perhaps he calls upon us to do nothing so often as "to renounce our own wills." This is a favorite phrase; and what does it imply? that we are to cease to will? Nothing less. The truth is, that the human will is never so strenuous, as in this act which is called the renunciation of itself, and by nothing does it more build up its own energy. The phrase means, that we should sacrifice inclination at the least suggestion of duty. But who does not know, that the mind never puts forth such strength of purpose or will, as in overcoming desire? And what is the highest end and benefit of this warfare with desire? It is, that the mind may accumulate force of moral purpose, that the will may more sternly, unconquerably resolve on the hardest duties and sublimest virtues to which God may call us.

Once more, we are again and again exhorted by Fenelon to "forget ourselves." And what means this? Self-oblivion, literally understood, is an impossibility. We may as easily annihilate our being as our self-consciousness. Self-remembrance is in truth a duty, needful to the safety of every hour, and especially necessary to the great work of life, which is the conforming of ourselves, of our whole nature, to the will of God. There is no danger of our thinking of ourselves too much, if we will think justly; that is, if we will view ourselves as what we are, as moral beings, accountable to a Divine Lawgiver, framed to delight in and to seek

Hosted by Google

virtue, framed for an ever-spreading philanthropy, called to sympathize with, and to suffer for, others, and, through this path, to ascend to our Original. There are, however, senses, in which we cannot too much forget ourselves. Our improvements of whatever kind, our good deeds, our virtues, whenever they are seized upon and magnified by self-love, or so recalled as to lift us above others, and to stifle that sense of deficiency and thirst for progress, by which alone we can be carried forward, these we cannot too earnestly drive from our thoughts. Our distinctions, whether of mind, body, or condition, when they minister to vanity or pride, when they weaken the consciousness of a common nature with the human race, narrow our sympathies, or deprave our judgments, these we cannot be too solicitous to forget. Our pleasures, when they are so exaggerated by the imagination as to distract and overwhelm the sense of duty, should be forced to quit their grasp on our minds. Such parts or constituents of ourselves we are to forget. Our moral, intellectual, immortal nature we cannot remember too much. Under the consciousness of it we are always to live.

According to the views now given, self-crucifixion is the subjection or sacrifice of the inferior to the higher principles of our nature. It is the practical recognition of the supremacy and dignity of our rational and moral powers. No duty involves a more reverential view and care of ourselves. We have been the more solicitous to give this view of self-renunciation, because its true spirit is often mistaken, because it is often so set forth as to degrade, instead of exalting, the mind. In truth, we feel more and more the importance of bringing men to juster conceptions of the inward gifts

Hosted by Google

with which God has enriched them. We desire nothing so much, as to open their eyes to their own spiritual possessions. We feel indeed the difficulties of the subject. We know, that we have to combat with a secret incredulity in many minds. We know, that the clearest expositions will be imperfectly understood by those, who have nothing in their experience to interpret what we utter. The mind, we are aware, can be clearly revealed to itself, only by its own progress. Its capacities of thought, of action, of endurance, of triumphing over pleasure and pain, of identifying itself with other beings, of seeking truth without prejudice and without fear, of uniting itself with God, of sacrificing life to duty, these immortal energies can only be felt to be real, and duly honored, by those in whom they are gradually and steadily unfolded. Still we do not despair of meeting some response, though faint, in multitudes. Such a spirit, as God has breathed into men, cannot easily exist, without giving some signs of its divine original. In most men, there are some revelations of their own nature, some beams of a light which belongs not to the earth, some sympathies with what is good and great in character, some perceptions of beauty, some gushings from the deep fountain of love in the soul, some thirstings for a purer happiness, some experience of the peculiar joy of a disinterested deed, some dim conceptions at least of their intimate relations to God. Most men understand through experience these testimonies to the secret wealth and immortal destination of the soul; whilst, in not a few, such a measure of intellectual and moral power has been called forth, that nothing is needed but a wise direction of their thoughts upon themselves, to open to them the

Hosted by Google

magnificent prospect of their own spiritual energy, and of the unbounded good into which it may be unfolded. For such we have written. We regard nothing so important to a human being, as the knowledge of his own mind, and of its intimate connexion with the Infinite Mind. Faith in what man contains as a germ in his own breast, faith in what he may become, in what he was framed to be, in that state of power, light, purity, joy, to which Jesus Christ came to exalt him, this faith seems to us the quickening, saving, renovating principle, which God sent his Son to revive in the soul, and happy are they who can spread its empire in the world.

We have finished our remarks on the first element of perfection, according to Fenelon, self-crucifixion. We proceed to the second, love to God. On this topic we intended to enlarge, but have left ourselves little room. We are happy to say, that we have less to object to Fenelon's expositions under this head, than under the former. Of the grandeur and the happiness of this principle he speaks truly, worthily, in the penetrating language of calm and deep conviction. In one particular, we think him defective. He has not stated, and in truth, very few do state, with sufficient strength and precision, the moral foundation and the moral nature of religion. He has not taught, with sufficient clearness, the great truth, that love to God is, from beginning to end, the love of virtue. He did not sufficiently feel, that religion is the expansion and most perfect form of the moral faculty of man. He sometimes teaches, that, to do God's will, we must renounce ourselves and silence reason; as if the divine will were not in accordance with our faculties; as if it were something dark

Hosted by Google

and mysterious ; as if, to follow it, we must quench the light of our own minds. Now the truth is, that the divine will is in harmony with our nature. It is God's approbation and injunction of that moral rectitude, of which the great lines are written on the human soul, and to which reason and conscience, even when they fail to secure obedience, do yet secretly, and in no small degree, respond. The human mind and the divine law are not distinct and disconnected things. If man were not a law to himself, he could not receive the revelation of a law from Heaven. Were not the principle of duty an essential part of his mind, he could be bound to no obedience. Religion has its foundation in our moral nature, and is indeed its most enlarged and glorious form, and we lament that this great truth does not shine more brightly in the pages of Fenelon. We intended to give to it a particular discussion ; but as we cannot do it justice in the present article, we prefer to dismiss it, and to offer a few miscellaneous remarks on that sentiment of love towards God, on which our author so perpetually insists.

We are aware that to some men Fenelon may seem an enthusiast. Some may doubt or deny the possibility of that strong, deep, supreme affection towards the Supreme Being, with which Fenelon's book overflows. We wonder at this skepticism. We know no property of human nature more undoubted, than its capacity and fulness of affection. We see its love overflowing in its domestic connexions, in friendships, and especially in its interest in beings separated by oceans and the lapse of ages. Let it not be said, that the affections, to which we here refer, have fellow-beings for their objects, and do not therefore prove our capacity of re-

Hosted by Google

ligious attachment. The truth is, that one spirit runs through all our affections, as far as they are pure; and love to mankind, directed aright, is the germ and element of love to the Divinity. Whatever is excellent and venerable in human beings, is of God, and in attaching ourselves to it we are preparing our hearts for its Author. Whoever sees and recognises the moral dignity of impartial justice and disinterested goodness in his fellow-creatures, has begun to pay homage to the attributes of God. The first emotion awakened in the soul, we mean filial attachment, is the dawning of love to our Father in Heaven. Our deep interest in the history of good and great men, our veneration towards enlightened legislators, our sympathy with philanthropists, our delight in mighty efforts of intellect consecrated to a good cause, all these sentiments prove our capacity of an affectionate reverence to God; for he is at once the inspirer and the model of this intellectual and moral grandeur in his creatures. We even think, that our love of nature has an affinity with the love of God, and was meant as a preparation for it; for the harmonies of nature are only his wisdom made visible; the heavens, so sublime, are a revelation of his immensity; and the beauty of creation images to us his overflowing love and blessedness. To us, hardly any thing seems plainer, than that the soul was made for God. Not only its human affections guide it to him; not only its deeps wants, its dangers, and helplessness, guide it to him; there are still higher indications of the end for which it was made. It has a capacity of more than human love, a principle or power of adoration, which cannot bound itself to finite natures, which carries up the thoughts above the visible universe, and which, in

Hosted by Google

approaching God, rises into a solemn transport, a mingled awe and joy, prophetic of a higher life; and a brighter signature of our end and happiness cannot be conceived.

We are aware that it may be objected, that many and great obstructions to a supreme love of God belong to our very constitution and condition, and that these go far to disprove the doctrine of our being framed for religion as our chief good. But this argument does not move us. We learn from every survey of man's nature and history, that he is ordained to approach the end of his creation through many and great obstructions; that effort is the immutable law of his being; that a good, in proportion to its grandeur, is encompassed with hardship. The obstructions to religion are not greater than those to knowledge; and accordingly history gives as dark views of human ignorance, as of human guilt. Yet who, on this ground, denies that man was formed for knowledge, that progress in truth is the path of nature, and that he has impulses which are to carry forward his intellectual powers without end? It is God's pleasure, in his provisions for the mind, as well as for the body, to give us in a rude state the materials of good, and to leave us to frame from them, amidst much conflict, a character of moral and religious excellence; and in this ordination we see his wise benevolence; for by this we may rise to the unutterable happiness of a free and moral union with our Creator. We ought to add, that the obstructions to the love of God do not lie wholly in ourselves. Perhaps the greatest is a false theology. This interposes thick clouds between the soul and its Maker. It darkens and dishonors God and his works, and leaves nothing to sustain our trust and love.

Hosted by Google

The motives, which are most commonly urged for cherishing supreme affection towards God, are drawn from our frailty and weakness, and from our need of more than human succour in the trials of life and in the pains of death. But religion has a still higher claim. It answers to the deepest want of human nature. We refer to our want of some being or beings, to whom we may give our hearts, whom we may love more than ourselves, for whom we may live and be ready to die, and whose character responds to that idea of perfection, which, however dim and undefined, is an essential element of every human soul. We cannot be happy beyond our love. At the same time, love may prove our chief woe, if bestowed unwisely, disproportionately, and on unworthy objects; if confined to beings of imperfect virtue, with whose feelings we cannot always innocently sympathize, whose interests we cannot always righteously promote, who narrow us to themselves instead of breathing universal charity, who are frail, mutable, exposed to suffering, pain, and death. To secure a growing happiness and a spotless virtue, we need for the heart a being worthy of its whole treasure of love, to whom we may consecrate our whole existence, in approaching whom we enter an atmosphere of purity and brightness, in sympathizing with whom we cherish only noble sentiments, in devoting ourselves to whom we espouse great and enduring interests, in whose character we find the spring of an ever-enlarging philanthropy, and by attachment to whom, all our other attachments are hallowed, protected, and supplied with tender and sublime consolations under bereavement and blighted hope. Such a being is God.

The word which Fenelon has most frequently used

Hosted by Google

to express the happiness to which the mind ascends by a supreme love of God, is "peace," perhaps the most expressive which language affords. We fear, however, that its full import is not always received. There is a twofold peace. The first is negative. It is relief from disquiet and corroding care. It is repose after conflict and storms. But there is another and a higher peace, to which this is but the prelude, "a peace of God which passeth all understanding," and properly called "the kingdom of heaven within us." This state is any thing but negative. It is the highest and most strenuous action of the soul, but an entirely harmonious action, in which all our powers and affections are blended in a beautiful proportion, and sustain and perfect one another. It is more than silence after storms. It is as the concord of all melodious sounds. Has the reader never known a season, when, in the fullest flow of thought and feeling, in the universal action of the soul, an inward calm, profound as midnight silence, yet bright as the still summer noon, full of joy, but unbroken by one throb of tumultuous passion, has been breathed through his spirit, and given him a glimpse and presage of the serenity of a happier world? Of this character is the peace of religion. It is a conscious harmony with God and the creation, an alliance of love with all beings, a sympathy with all that is pure and happy, a surrender of every separate will and interest, a participation of the spirit and life of the universe, an entire concord of purpose with its Infinite Original. This is peace, and the true happiness of man; and we think that human nature has never entirely lost sight of this its great end. It has always sighed for a repose, in which energy of thought and will might be tempered with an

Hosted by Google

all-pervading tranquillity. We seem to discover aspirations after this good, a dim consciousness of it, in all ages of the world. We think we see it in those systems of Oriental and Grecian philosophy, which proposed, as the consummation of present virtue, a release from all disquiet, and an intimate union and harmony with the Divine Mind. We even think, that we trace this consciousness, this aspiration, in the works of ancient art which time has spared to us, in which the sculptor, aiming to embody his deepest thoughts of human perfection, has joined with the fulness of life and strength, a repose, which breathes into the spectator an admiration as calm as it is exalted. Man, we believe, never wholly loses the sentiment of his true good. There are yearnings, sighings, which he does not himself comprehend, which break forth alike in his prosperous and adverse seasons, which betray a deep, indestructible faith in a good that he has not found, and which, in proportion as they grow distinct, rise to God, and concentrate the soul in him, as at once its life and rest, the fountain at once of energy and of peace.

In the remarks, which have now been suggested by the writings of Fenelon, we have aimed to free religion from exaggerations, which, we fear, weaken its influence over reasonable men, and at the same time to illustrate its dignity and happiness. We want time, or we should enlarge on the importance of this great subject to every human being. We cannot however leave it, without earnestly recommending it to the attention of men of superior minds. The neglect which it generally receives from these is one of the most discouraging signs of our times. The claims of religion on intelligent

Hosted by Google

men are not yet understood, and the low place which it holds among the objects of liberal inquiry, will one day be recollected as the shame of our age. Some remarks on this topic may form a not unsuitable conclusion to the present article.

It is, we fear, an unquestionable fact, that religion, considered as an intellectual subject, is in a great measure left to a particular body of men, as a professional concern ; and the fact is as much to be wondered at as deplored. It is wonderful that any mind, and especially a superior one, should not see in religion the highest object of thought. It is wonderful that the infinite God, the noblest theme of the universe, should be considered as a monopoly of professed theologians ; that a subject so vast, awful, and exalting, as our relation to the Divinity, should be left to technical men, to be handled so much for sectarian purposes. Religion is the property and dearest interest of the human race. Every man has an equal concern in it. It should be approached with an independence on human authority. It should be rescued from all the factions, which have seized upon it as their particular possession. Men of the highest intellect should feel, that, if there be a God, then his character and our relation to him throw all other subjects into obscurity, and that the intellect, if not consecrated to him, can never attain its true use, its full dimensions, and its proper happiness. Religion, if it be true, is central truth, and all knowledge, which is not gathered round it, and quickened and illuminated by it, is hardly worthy the name. To this great theme we would summon all orders of mind, the scholar, the statesman, the student of nature, and the observer of life. It is a subject to which every faculty and every

Hosted by Google

acquisition may pay tribute, which may receive aids and lights from the accuracy of the logician, from the penetrating spirit of philosophy, from the intuitions of genius, from the researches of history, from the science of the mind, from physical science, from every branch of criticism, and, though last not least, from the spontaneous suggestions and the moral aspirations of pure but unlettered men.

It is a fact which shocks us, and which shows the degraded state of religion, that not a few superior minds look down upon it as a subject beneath their investigation. Though allied with all knowledge, and especially with that of human nature and human duty, it is regarded as a separate and inferior study, particularly fitted to the gloom of a convent, and the seclusion of a minister. Religion is still confounded, in many and in gifted minds, with the jargon of monks, and the subtilties and strifes of theologians. It is thought a mystery, which, far from coalescing, wars with our other knowledge. It is never ranked with the sciences which expand and adorn the mind. It is regarded as a method of escaping future ruin, not as a vivifying truth through which the intellect and heart are alike to be invigorated and enlarged. Its bearing on the great objects of thought and the great interests of life is hardly suspected. This degradation of religion into a technical study, this disjunction of it from morals, from philosophy, from the various objects of liberal research, has done it infinite injury, has checked its progress, has perpetuated errors which gathered round it in times of barbarism and ignorance, has made it a mark for the sophistry and ridicule of the licentious, and has infused a lurking skepticism into many powerful understandings.

Hosted by Google

Nor has religion suffered alone. The whole mind is darkened by the obscuration of this its central light. Its reasonings and judgments become unstable through want of this foundation to rest upon. Religion is to the whole sphere of truth, what God is to the universe, and in dethroning it, or confining it to a narrow range, we commit very much such an injury on the soul, as the universe would suffer, were the Infinite Being to abandon it, or to contract his energy to a small province of his creation.

The injury done to literature by divorcing it from religion is a topic worthy of separate discussion. Literature has thus lost power and permanent interest. It has become, in a great measure, superficial, an image of transient modes of thought and of arbitrary forms of life, not the organ and expression of immutable truth, and of deep workings of the soul. We beg not to be misunderstood. We have no desire that literature should confine itself wholly or chiefly to religious topics, and we hardly know a greater calamity which it could incur, than by degenerating into religious cant. Next to profaneness, we dread the affectation of piety and the mechanical repetition of sacred phraseology. We only lament, that literature has so generally been the product and utterance of minds, which have not lived, thought, and written, under the light of a rational and sublime faith. Severed from this, it wants the principle of immortality. We do not speak lightly when we say, that all works of the intellect, which have not in some measure been quickened by the spirit of religion, are doomed to perish or to lose their power; and that genius is preparing for itself a sepulchre, when it disjoins itself from the Universal Mind. Religion is not always to

Hosted by Google

remain in its present dark, depressed condition. Already there are signs of a brighter day. It begins to be viewed more generously. It is gradually attracting to itself superior understandings. It is rising from the low rank of a professional, technical study, and asserting its supremacy among the objects of the mind. A new era, we trust, is opening upon the world, and all literature will feel its power. In proportion as the true and sublime conception of God shall unfold itself in the soul, and shall become there a central sun, shedding its beams on all objects of thought, there will be a want of sympathy with all works which have not been quickened by this heavenly influence. It will be felt that the poet has known little of nature, that he has seen it only under clouds, if he have not seen it under this celestial light. It will be felt, that man, the great subject of literature, when viewed in separation from his Maker and his end, can be as little understood and portrayed, as a plant torn from the soil in which it grew, and cut off from communication with the clouds and sun.

We are aware that objections will spring up to the doctrine, that all literature should be produced under the influence of religion. We shall be told, that in this way literature will lose all variety and spirit, that a monotonous and solemn hue will spread itself over writing, and that a library will have the air of a tomb. We do not wonder at this fear. Religion has certainly been accustomed to speak in sepulchral tones, and to wear any aspect but a bright and glowing one. It has lost its free and various movement. But let us not ascribe to its nature, what has befallen it from adverse circumstances. The truth is, that religion, justly viewed, sur-

Hosted by Google

passes all other principles, in giving a free and manifold action to the mind. It recognises in every faculty and sentiment the workmanship of God, and assigns a sphere of agency to each. It takes our whole nature under its guardianship, and with a parental love ministers to its inferior as well as higher gratifications. False religion mutilates the soul, sees evil in our innocent sensibilities, and rules with a tyrant's frown and rod. True religion is a mild and lawful sovereign, governing to protect, to give strength, to unfold all our inward resources. We believe, that, under its influence, literature is to pass its present limits, and to put itself forth in original forms of composition. Religion is of all principles most fruitful, multiform, and unconfined. It is sympathy with that Being, who seems to delight in diversifying the modes of his agency, and the products of his wisdom and power. It does not chain us to a few essential duties, or express itself in a few unchanging modes of writing. It has the liberality and munificence of nature, which not only produces the necessary root and grain, but pours forth fruits and flowers. It has the variety and bold contrasts of nature, which, at the foot of the awful mountain, scoops out the freshest, sweetest valleys, and embosoms, in the wild, troubled ocean, islands, whose vernal airs, and loveliness, and teeming fruitfulness, almost breathe the joys of Paradise. Religion will accomplish for literature what it most needs; that is, will give it depth, at the same time that it heightens its grace and beauty. The union of these attributes is most to be desired. Our literature is lamentably superficial, and to some the beautiful and the superficial even seem to be naturally conjoined. Let not beauty be so wronged. It resides chiefly in pro-

Hosted by Google

found thoughts and feelings. It overflows chiefly in the writings of poets, gifted with a sublime and piercing vision. A beautiful literature springs from the depth and fulness of intellectual and moral life, from an energy of thought and feeling, to which nothing, as we believe, ministers so largely as enlightened religion.

So far from a monotonous solemnity overspreading literature in consequence of the all-pervading influence of religion, we believe, that the sportive and comic forms of composition, instead of being abandoned, will only be refined and improved. We know that these are supposed to be frowned upon by piety; but they have their root in the constitution which God has given us, and ought not therefore to be indiscriminately condemned. The propensity to wit and laughter does indeed, through excessive indulgence, often issue in a character of heartless levity, low mimicry, or unfeeling ridicule. It often seeks gratification in regions of impurity, throws a gayety round vice, and sometimes even pours contempt on virtue. But, though often and mournfully perverted, it is still a gift of God, and may and ought to minister, not only to innocent pleasure, but to the intellect and the heart. Man was made for relaxation as truly as for labor; and by a law of his nature, which has not received the attention it deserves, he finds perhaps no relaxation so restorative, as that in which he reverts to his childhood, seems to forget his wisdom, leaves the imagination to exhilarate itself by sportive inventions, talks of amusing incongruities in conduct and events, smiles at the innocent eccentricities and odd mistakes of those whom he most esteems, allows himself in arch allusions or kind-hearted satire, and transports himself into a world of ludicrous com-

Hosted by Google

binations. We have said, that, on these occasions, the mind seems to put off its wisdom; but the truth is, that, in a pure mind, wisdom retreats, if we may so say, to its centre, and there, unseen, keeps guard over this transient folly, draws delicate lines which are never to be passed in the freest moments, and, like a judicious parent watching the sports of childhood, preserves a stainless innocence of soul in the very exuberance of gayety. This combination of moral power with wit and humor, with comic conceptions and irrepressible laughter, this union of mirth and virtue, belongs to an advanced stage of the character; and we believe, that, in proportion to the diffusion of an enlightened religion, this action of the mind will increase, and will overflow in compositions, which, joining innocence to sportiveness, will communicate unmixed delight. Religion is not at variance with occasional mirth. In the same character, the solemn thought and the sublime emotions of the improved Christian, may be joined with the unanxious freedom, buoyancy, and gayety of early years.

We will add but one more illustration of our views. We believe, that the union of religion with genius will favor that species of composition to which it may seem at first to be least propitious. We refer to that department of literature, which has for its object the delineation of the stronger and more terrible and guilty passions. Strange as it may appear, these gloomy and appalling features of our nature may be best comprehended and portrayed by the purest and noblest minds. The common idea is, that overwhelming emotions, the more they are experienced, can the more effectually be described. We have one strong presumption against this doctrine. Tradition leads us to believe, that Shak-

Hosted by Google

speare, though he painted so faithfully and fearfully the storms of passion, was a calm and cheerful man. The passions are too engrossed by their objects to meditate on themselves; and none are more ignorant of their growth and subtile workings, than their own victims. Nothing reveals to us the secrets of our own souls like religion; and in disclosing to us, in ourselves, the tendency of passion to absorb every energy, and to spread its hues over every thought, it gives us a key to all souls; for, in all, human nature is essentially one, having the same spiritual elements, and the same grand features. No man, it is believed, understands the wild and irregular motions of the mind, like him in whom a principle of divine order has begun to establish peace. No man knows the horror of thick darkness which gathers over the slaves of vehement passion, like him who is rising into the light and liberty of virtue. There is indeed a selfish shrewdness, which is thought to give a peculiar and deep insight into human nature. But the knowledge, of which it boasts, is partial, distorted, and vulgar, and wholly unfit for the purposes of literature We value it little. We believe, that no qualification avails so much to a knowledge of human nature in all its forms, in its good and evil manifestations, as that enlightened, celestial charity, which religion alone inspires; for this establishes sympathies between us and all men, and thus makes them intelligible to us. A man, imbued with this spirit, alone contemplates vice as it really exists, and as it ought always to be described. In the most depraved fellow-beings he sees partakers of his own nature. Amidst the terrible ravages of the passions, he sees conscience, though prostrate, not destroyed, nor wholly powerless. He sees the proofs

Hosted by Google

of an unextinguished moral life, in inward struggles, in occasional relentings, in sighings for lost innocence, in reviving throbs of early affections, in the sophistry by which the guilty mind would become reconciled to itself, in remorse, in anxious forebodings, in despair, perhaps in studied recklessness and cherished self-forgetfulness. These conflicts, between the passions and the moral nature, are the most interesting subjects in the branch of literature to which we refer, and we believe, that to portray them with truth and power, the man of genius can find in nothing such effectual aid, as in the developement of the moral and religious principles in his own breast.

We have given but a superficial view of a great subject. The connexion of religion with intellect and literature is yet to be pointed out. We conclude with expressing our strong conviction that the human mind will become more various, piercing, and all-comprehending, more capable of understanding and expressing the solemn and the sportive, the terrible and the beautiful, the profound and the tender, in proportion as it shall be illumined and penetrated by the true knowledge of God. Genius, intellect, imagination, taste, and sensibility, must all be baptized into religion, or they will never know, and never make known, their real glory and immortal power.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

THE MORAL ARGUMENT AGAINST

CALVINISM,

Illustrated in a Review of a Work entitled "A General View of the Doctrines of Christianity, designed more especially for the Edification and Instruction of Families. Boston, 1809."

The work, of which we have prefixed the title to this article, was published several years ago, and has been read by many among us with pleasure and profit. But it is not known as widely as it should be, and we wish to call to it the notice which it merits. It is not an original work, but was compiled chiefly from the writings of the Rev. Robert Fellowes, whose name is probably known to most of our readers. The title we think not altogether happy, because it raises an expectation which the book does not answer. We should expect from it a regular statement of the great truths of our religion; but we find, what at present is perhaps as useful, a vindication of Christianity from the gross errors, which Calvinism has labored to identify with this divine system. This may easily be supposed from the table of contents. The book professes to treat of the following subjects: — The nature of religion and the mistakes that occur on that subject; the free-agency

Hosted by Google

and accountableness of man; the fall of Adam, and original sin; the doctrine of faith in general, and of religious faith in particular; the doctrine of works; the doctrine of regeneration; the doctrine of repentance; the doctrine of grace; the doctrine of election and reprobation; the doctrine of perseverance; the visiting of the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and the sin against the Holy Ghost. — By those, who are acquainted with the five thorny points of Calvinism, the design of this compilation will be sufficiently understood from the enumeration of topics now given; and few designs are more praiseworthy, than to free Christianity from the reproach brought upon it by that system.

The work under review is professedly popular in its style and mode of discussion. It has little refined and elaborate reasoning, but appeals to the great moral principles of human nature, and to the general strain of the Scriptures. It expresses strongly and without circumlocution the abhorrence with which every mind, uncorrupted by false theology, must look on Calvinism; and although some of its delineations may be overcharged, yet they are substantially correct, and their strength is their excellence. The truth is, that nothing is so necessary on this subject as to awaken moral feeling in men's breasts. Calvinism owes its perpetuity to the influence of fear in palsying the moral nature. Men's minds and consciences are subdued by terror, so that they dare not confess, even to themselves, the shrinking, which they feel, from the unworthy views which this system gives of God; and, by thus smothering their just abhorrence, they gradually extinguish it, and even come to vindicate in God what would disgrace

Hosted by Google

his creatures. A voice of power and solemn warning is needed to rouse them from this lethargy, to give them a new and a juster dread, the dread of incurring God's displeasure, by making him odious, and exposing religion to insult and aversion. — In the present article, we intend to treat this subject with great freedom. But we beg that it may be understood that by Calvinism we intend only the peculiarities or distinguishing features of that system. We would also have it remembered, that these peculiarities form a small part of the religious faith of a Calvinist. He joins with them the general, fundamental, and most important truths of Christianity, by which they are always neutralized in a greater or less degree, and in some cases nullified. Accordingly it has been our happiness to see in the numerous body by which they are professed, some of the brightest examples of Christian virtue. Our hostility to the doctrine does not extend to its advocates. In bearing our strongest testimony against error, we do not the less honor the moral and religious worth, with which it is often connected.

The book under review will probably be objected to by theologians, because it takes no notice of a distinction, invented by Calvinistic metaphysicians, for rescuing their doctrines from the charge of aspersing God's equity and goodness. We refer to the distinction between *natural* and *moral inability*, a subtilty which may be thought to deserve some attention, because it makes such a show in some of the principal books of this sect. But, with due deference to its defenders, it seems to us groundless and idle, a distinction without a difference. An inability to do our duty, which is *born* with us, is to all intents and according to the

Hosted by Google

established meaning of the word, *natural.* Call it moral, or what you please, it is still a part of the nature which our Creator gave us, and to suppose that he punishes us for it, because it is an inability seated in the will, is just as absurd, as to suppose him to punish us for a weakness of sight or of a limb. Common people cannot understand this distinction, cannot split this hair; and it is no small objection to Calvinism, that, according to its ablest defenders, it can only be reconciled to God's perfections, by a metaphysical subtilty, which the mass of people cannot comprehend.

If we were to speak as critics of the style of this book, we should say, that, whilst generally clear, and sometimes striking, it has the faults of the style which was very current not many years ago in this country, and which, we rejoice to say, is giving place to a better. The style to which we refer, and which threatened to supplant good writing in this country, intended to be elegant, but fell into jejuneness and insipidity. It delighted in words and arrangements of words, which were little soiled by common use, and mistook a spruce neatness for grace. We had a Procrustes' bed for sentences, and there seemed to be a settled war between the style of writing and the free style of conversation. Times we think have changed. Men have learned more to write as they speak, and are ashamed to dress up familiar thoughts, as if they were just arrived from a far country, and could not appear in public without a foreign and studied attire. They have learned that common words are common, precisely because most fitted to express real feeling and strong conception, and that the circuitous, measured phraseology, which was called elegance, was but the parade of weakness. They have

Hosted by Google

learned that words are the signs of thought, and worthless counterfeits without it, and that style is good, when, instead of being anxiously cast into a mould, it seems a free and natural expression of thought, and gives to us with power the workings of the author's mind.

We have been led to make these remarks on the style which in a degree marks the book before us, from a persuasion, that this mode of writing has been particularly injurious to religion, and to rational religion. It has crept into sermons perhaps more than into any other compositions, and has imbued them with that soporific quality, which they have sometimes been found to possess in an eminent degree. How many hearers have been soothed by a smooth, watery flow of words, a regular chime of sentences, and elegantly rocked into repose! We are aware, that preachers, above all writers, are excusable for this style, because it is the easiest; and, having too much work to do, they must do it of course in the readiest way. But we mourn the necessity, and mourn still more the effect.—It gives us great pleasure to say, that, in this particular, we think we perceive an improvement taking place in this region. Preaching is becoming more direct, aims more at impression, and seeks the nearest way to men's hearts and consciences. We often hear from the pulpit strong thought in plain and strong language. It is hoped, from the state of society, that we shall not fly from one extreme to another, and degenerate into coarseness; but perhaps even this is a less evil than tameness and insipidity.

To return; the principal argument against Calvinism, in the General View of Christian Doctrines, is the *moral argument*, or that which is drawn from the inconsistency of the system with the divine perfections. It is

Hosted by Google

plain, that a doctrine, which contradicts our best ideas of goodness and justice, cannot come from the just and good God, or be a true representation of his character. This moral argument has always been powerful to the pulling down of the strong-holds of Calvinism. Even in the dark period, when this system was shaped and finished at Geneva, its advocates often writhed under the weight of it; and we cannot but deem it a mark of the progress of society, that Calvinists are more and more troubled with the palpable repugnance of their doctrines to God's nature, and accordingly labor to soften and explain them, until in many cases the name only is retained. If the stern reformer of Geneva could lift up his head, and hear the mitigated tone, in which some of his professed followers dispense his fearful doctrines, we fear, that he could not lie down in peace, until he had poured out his displeasure on their cowardice and degeneracy. He would tell them, with a frown, that *moderate Calvinism* was a solecism, a contradiction in terms, and would bid them in scorn to join their real friend, Arminius. Such is the power of public opinion and of an improved state of society on creeds, that naked, undisguised Calvinism is not very fond of showing itself, and many of consequence know imperfectly what it means. What then is the system against which the View of Christian Doctrines is directed?

Calvinism teaches, that, in consequence of Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, God brings into life all his posterity with a nature wholly corrupt, so that they are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually. It teaches, that all mankind, having fallen in Adam, are under God's wrath

Hosted by Google

and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever. It teaches, that, from this ruined race, God, out of his mere good pleasure, has elected a certain number to be saved by Christ, not induced to this choice by any foresight of their faith or good works, but wholly by his free grace and love; and that, having thus predestinated them to eternal life, he renews and sanctifies them by his almighty and special agency, and brings them into a state of grace, from which they cannot fall and perish. It teaches, that the rest of mankind he is pleased to pass over, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the honor of his justice and power; in other words, he leaves the rest to the corruption in which they were born, withholds the grace which is necessary to their recovery, and condemns them to "most grievous torments in soul and body without intermission in hell-fire for ever." Such is Calvinism, as gathered from the most authentic records of the doctrine. Whoever will consult the famous Assembly's Catechisms and Confession, will see the peculiarities of the system in all their length and breadth of deformity. A man of plain sense, whose spirit has not been broken to this creed by education or terror, will think that it is not necessary for us to travel to heathen countries, to learn how mournfully the human mind may misrepresent the Deity.

The moral argument against Calvinism, of which we have spoken, must seem irresistible to common and unperverted minds, after attending to the brief statement now given. It will be asked with astonishment, How is it possible that men can hold these doctrines and yet maintain God's goodness and equity? What principles

Hosted by Google

can be more contradictory ? — To remove the objection to Calvinism, which is drawn from its repugnance to the Divine perfections, recourse has been had, as before observed, to the distinction between natural and moral inability, and to other like subtilties. But a more common reply, we conceive, has been drawn from the weakness and imperfection of the human mind, and from its incapacity of comprehending God. Calvinists will tell us, that, because a doctrine opposes our convictions of rectitude, it is not necessarily false ; that apparent are not always real inconsistencies ; that God is an infinite and incomprehensible being, and not to be tried by *our* ideas of fitness and morality ; that we bring their system to an incompetent tribunal, when we submit it to the decision of human reason and conscience ; that we are weak judges of what is right and wrong, good and evil, in the Deity ; that the happiness of the universe may require an administration of human affairs which is very offensive to limited understandings ; that we must follow revelation, not reason or moral feeling, and must consider doctrines, which shock us in revelation, as awful mysteries, which are dark through our ignorance, and which time will enlighten. How little, it is added, can man explain or understand God's ways. How inconsistent the miseries of life appear with goodness in the Creator. How prone, too, have men always been to confound good and evil, to call the just, unjust. How presumptuous is it in such a being, to sit in judgment upon God, and to question the rectitude of the divine administration, because it shocks *his* sense of rectitude. Such we conceive to be a fair statement of the manner in which the Calvinist frequently meets the objection, that his system is at war with God's attributes. Such

Hosted by Google

the reasoning by which the voice of conscience and nature is stifled, and men are reconciled to doctrines, which, if tried by the established principles of morality, would be rejected with horror. On this reasoning we purpose to offer some remarks; and we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity, to give our views of *the confidence which is due to our rational and moral faculties in religion.*

That God is infinite, and that man often errs, we affirm as strongly as our Calvinistic brethren. We desire to think humbly of ourselves, and reverently of our Creator. In the strong language of Scripture, "We now see through a glass darkly." "We cannot by searching find out God unto perfection. Clouds and darkness are round about him. His judgments are a great deep." God is great and good beyond utterance or thought. We have no disposition to idolize our own powers, or to penetrate the secret counsels of the Deity. But, on the other hand, we think it ungrateful to disparage the powers which our Creator has given us, or to question the certainty or importance of the knowledge, which he has seen fit to place within our reach. There is an affected humility, we think, as dangerous as pride. We may rate our faculties too meanly, as well as too boastingly. The worst error in religion, after all, is that of the skeptic, who records triumphantly the weaknesses and wanderings of the human intellect, and maintains, that no trust is due to the decisions of this erring reason. We by no means conceive, that man's greatest danger springs from pride of understanding, though we think as badly of this vice as other Christians. The history of the church proves, that men may trust their faculties too little as well as too much, and

Hosted by Google

that the timidity, which shrinks from investigation, has injured the mind, and betrayed the interests of Christianity, as much as an irreverent boldness of thought.

It is an important truth, which, we apprehend, has not been sufficiently developed, that the ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind. To confide in God, we must first confide in the faculties by which He is apprehended, and by which the proofs of his existence are weighed. A trust in our ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood is implied in every act of belief; for to question this ability would of necessity unsettle all belief. We cannot take a step in reasoning or action without a secret reliance on our own minds. Religion in particular implies, that we have understandings endowed and qualified for the highest employments of intellect. In affirming the existence and perfections of God, we suppose and affirm the existence in ourselves of faculties which correspond to these sublime objects, and which are fitted to discern them. Religion is a conviction and an act of the human soul, so that, in denying confidence to the one, we subvert the truth and claims of the other. Nothing is gained to piety by degrading human nature, for in the competency of this nature to know and judge of God all piety has its foundation. Our proneness to err instructs us indeed to use our powers with great caution, but not to contemn and neglect them. The occasional abuse of our faculties, be it ever so enormous, does not prove them unfit for their highest end, which is, to form clear and consistent views of God. Because our eyes sometimes fail or deceive us, would a wise man pluck them out, or cover them with a bandage, and choose to walk and work in the dark? or, because they cannot

Hosted by Google

distinguish distant objects, can they discern nothing clearly in their proper sphere, and is sight to be pronounced a fallacious guide? Men who, to support a creed, would shake our trust in the calm, deliberate, and distinct decisions of our rational and moral powers, endanger religion more than its open foes, and forge the deadliest weapon for the infidel.

It is true that God is an infinite being, and also true, that his powers and perfections, his purposes and operations, his ends and means, being unlimited, are *incomprehensible*. In other words, they cannot be *wholly taken in* or *embraced* by the human mind. In the strong and figurative language of Scripture, we "know nothing" of God's ways; that is, we know *very few* of them. But this is just as true of the most advanced archangel as of man. In comparison with the vastness of God's system, the range of the highest created intellect is narrow; and, in this particular, man's lot does not differ from that of his elder brethren in heaven. We are both confined in our observation and experience to a little spot in the creation. But are an angel's faculties worthy of no trust, or is his knowledge uncertain, because he learns and reasons from a small part of God's works? or are his judgments respecting the Creator to be charged with presumption, because his views do not spread through the whole extent of the universe? We grant that our understandings cannot stretch beyond a very narrow sphere. But still the lessons, which we learn within this sphere, are just as sure, as if it were indefinitely enlarged. Because much is unexplored, we are not to suspect what we have actually discovered. Knowledge is not the less real, because confined. The man, who has never set foot beyond his native village,

Hosted by Google

knows its scenery and inhabitants as undoubtingly, as if he had travelled to the poles. We indeed see very little; but that little is as true, as if every thing else were seen; and our future discoveries must agree with and support it. Should the whole order and purposes of the universe be opened to us, it is certain that nothing would be disclosed, which would in any degree shake our persuasion, that the earth is inhabited by rational and moral beings, who are authorized to expect from their Creator the most benevolent and equitable government. No extent of observation can unsettle those primary and fundamental principles of moral truth, which we derive from our highest faculties operating in the relations in which God has fixed us. In every region and period of the universe, it will be as true as it is now on the earth, that knowledge and power are the measures of responsibility, and that natural incapacity absolves from guilt. These and other moral verities, which are among our clearest perceptions, would, if possible, be strengthened, in proportion as our powers should be enlarged; because harmony and consistency are the characters of God's administration, and all our researches into the universe only serve to manifest its unity, and to show a wider operation of the laws which we witness and experience on earth.

We grant that God is *incomprehensible*, in the sense already given. But he is not therefore *unintelligible*; and this distinction we conceive to be important. We do not pretend to know the *whole* nature and properties of God, but still we can form some *clear ideas* of him, and can reason from these ideas as justly as from any other. The truth is, that we cannot be said to comprehend any being whatever, not the simplest plant or

Hosted by Google

animal. All have hidden properties. Our knowledge of all is limited. But have we therefore no distinct ideas of the objects around us, and is all our reasoning about them unworthy of trust? Because God is infinite, his name is not therefore a mere sound. It is a representative of some distinct conceptions of our Creator; and these conceptions are as sure, and important, and as proper materials for the reasoning faculty, as they would be if our views were indefinitely enlarged. We cannot indeed trace God's goodness and rectitude through the whole field of his operations; but we know the essential nature of these attributes, and therefore can often judge what accords with and opposes them. God's goodness, because infinite, does not cease to be goodness, or essentially differ from the same attribute in man; nor does justice change its nature, so that it cannot be understood, because it is seated in an unbounded mind. There have indeed been philosophers, "falsely so called," who have argued from the unlimited nature of God, that we cannot ascribe to him justice and other moral attributes, in any proper or definite sense of those words; and the inference is plain, that all religion or worship, wanting an intelligible object, must be a misplaced, wasted offering. This doctrine from the infidel we reject with abhorrence; but something, not very different, too often reaches us from the mistaken Christian, who, to save his creed, shrouds the Creator in utter darkness. In opposition to both, we maintain that God's attributes are intelligible, and that we can conceive as truly of his goodness and justice, as of these qualities in men. In fact, these qualities are essentially the same in God and man, though differing in degree, in purity, and in extent of operation. We

Hosted by Google

know not and we cannot conceive of any other justice or goodness, than we learn from our own nature; and if God have not these, he is altogether unknown to us as a moral being; he offers nothing for esteem and love to rest upon; the objection of the infidel is just, that worship is wasted; "We worship we know not what."

It is asked, On what authority do we ascribe to God goodness and rectitude, in the sense in which these attributes belong to men, or how can we judge of the nature of attributes in the mind of the Creator? We answer by asking, How is it that we become acquainted with the mind of a fellow-creature? The last is as invisible, as removed from *immediate* inspection, as the first. Still we do not hesitate to speak of the justice and goodness of a neighbour; and how do we gain our knowledge? We answer, by witnessing the effects, operations, and expressions of these attributes. It is a law of our nature to argue from the effect to the cause, from the action to the agent, from the ends proposed and from the means of pursuing them, to the character and disposition of the being in whom we observe them. By these processes, we learn the invisible mind and character of man; and by the same we ascend to the mind of God, whose works, effects, operations, and ends are as expressive and significant of justice and goodness, as the best and most decisive actions of men. If this reasoning be sound (and all religion rests upon it,) then God's justice and goodness are intelligible attributes, agreeing essentially with the same qualities in ourselves. Their operation indeed is infinitely wider, and they are employed in accomplishing not only immediate but remote and unknown ends. Of consequence, we must expect that many parts of the divine adminis-

Hosted by Google

tration will be *obscure*, that is, will not produce *immediate* good, and an *immediate* distinction between virtue and vice. But still the unbounded operation of these attributes does not change their nature. They are still the same, as if they acted in the narrowest sphere. We can still determine in many cases what does not accord with them. We are particularly sure that those essential principles of justice, which enter into and even form our conception of this attribute, must pervade every province and every period of the administration of a just being, and that to suppose the Creator in any instance to forsake them, is to charge him directly with unrighteousness, however loudly the lips may compliment his equity.

"But is it not presumptuous in man," it is continually said, "to sit in judgment on God?" We answer, that to "sit in judgment on God" is an ambiguous and offensive phrase, conveying to common minds the ideas of irreverence, boldness, familiarity. The question would be better stated thus;—Is it not presumptuous in man to judge concerning God, and concerning what agrees or disagrees with his attributes? We answer confidently, No; for in many cases we are competent and even bound to judge. And we plead first in our defence the Scriptures. How continually does God in his word appeal to the understanding and moral judgment of man. "O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it." We observe, in the next place, that all religion supposes and is built on judgments passed by us on God and on his operations. Is it not, for example, our duty and a leading part of piety to *praise* God:

Hosted by Google

And what is praising a being, but to adjudge and ascribe to him just and generous deeds and motives? And of what value is praise, except from those, who are capable of distinguishing between actions which exalt and actions which degrade the character? Is it presumption to call God *excellent*? And what is this, but to refer his character to a standard of excellence, to try it by the established principles of rectitude, and to pronounce its conformity to them; that is, to judge of God and his operations?

We are presumptuous, we are told, in judging of our Creator. But he himself has made this our duty, in giving us a moral faculty; and to decline it, is to violate the primary law of our nature. Conscience, the sense of right, the power of perceiving moral distinctions, the power of discerning between justice and injustice, excellence and baseness, is the highest faculty given us by God, the whole foundation of our responsibility, and our sole capacity for religion. Now we are forbidden by this faculty to love a being, who wants, or who fails to discover, moral excellence. God, in giving us conscience, has implanted a principle within us, which forbids us to prostrate ourselves before mere power, or to offer praise where we do not discover worth; a principle, which challenges our supreme homage for supreme goodness, and which absolves us from guilt, when we abhor a severe and unjust administration. Our Creator has consequently waved his own claims on our veneration and obedience, any farther than he discovers himself to us in characters of benevolence, equity, and righteousness. He rests his authority on the perfect coincidence of his will and government with those great and fundamental principles of morality written on our

Hosted by Google

souls. He desires no worship, but that which springs from the exercise of our moral faculties upon his character, from our discernment and persuasion of his rectitude and goodness. He asks, he accepts, no love or admiration but from those, who can understand the nature and the proofs of moral excellence.

There are two or three striking facts, which show that there is no presumption in judging of God, and of what agrees or disagrees with his attributes. The first fact is, that the most intelligent and devout men have often employed themselves in proving the existence and perfections of God, and have been honored for this service to the cause of religion. Now we ask, what is meant by the *proofs* of a divine perfection? They are certain acts, operations, and methods of government, which are proper and natural effects, signs, and expressions of this perfection, and from which, according to the established principles of reasoning, it may be inferred. To prove the divine attributes is to collect and arrange those works and ways of the Creator, which accord with these attributes, correspond to them, flow from them, and express them. Of consequence, to prove them requires and implies *the power of judging of what agrees with them*, of discerning their proper marks and expressions. All our treatises on natural theology rest on this power. Every argument in support of a divine perfection is an exercise of it. To deny it, is to overthrow all religion.

Now if such are the proofs of God's goodness and justice, and if we are capable of discerning them, then we are not necessarily presumptuous, when we say of particular measures ascribed to him, that they are inconsistent with his attributes, and cannot belong to him.

Hosted by Google

There is plainly no more presumption in affirming of certain principles of administration, that they oppose God's equity and would prove him unrighteous, than to affirm of others, that they prove him upright and good. There are signs and evidences of injustice as unequivocal as those of justice; and our faculties are as adequate to the perception of the last as of the first. If they must not be trusted in deciding what would prove God unjust, they are unworthy of confidence when they gather evidences of his rectitude; and of course, the whole structure of religion must fall.

It is no slight objection to the mode of reasoning adopted by the Calvinist, that it renders the proof of the divine attributes impossible. When we object to his representations of the divine government, that they shock our clearest ideas of goodness and justice, he replies, that still they may be true, because we know very little of God, and what seems unjust to man, may be in the Creator the perfection of rectitude. Now this weapon has a double edge. If the strongest marks and expressions of injustice do not prove God unjust, then the strongest marks of the opposite character do not prove him righteous. If the first do not deserve confidence, because of our narrow views of God, neither do the last. If, when more shall be known, the first may be found consistent with perfect rectitude, so, when more shall be known, the last may be found consistent with infinite malignity and oppression. This reasoning of our opponents casts us on an ocean of awful uncertainty. Admit it, and we have no proofs of God's goodness and equity to rely upon. What we call proofs, may be mere appearances, which a wider knowledge of God may reverse. The future may show

Hosted by Google

us, that the very laws and works of the Creator, from which we now infer his kindness, are consistent with the most determined purpose to spread infinite misery and guilt, and were intended, by raising hope, to add the agony of disappointment to our other woes. Why may not these anticipations, horrible as they are, be verified by the unfolding of God's system, if our reasonings about his attributes are rendered so very uncertain, as Calvinism teaches, by the infinity of his nature?

We have mentioned one fact to show that it is not presumptuous to judge of God, and of what accords with and opposes his attributes; namely, the fact that his attributes are thought susceptible of proof. Another fact, very decisive on this point, is, that Christians of all classes have concurred in resting the truth of Christianity in a great degree on its *internal* evidence, that is, on its accordance with the perfections of God. How common is it to hear from religious teachers, that Christianity is worthy of a good and righteous being, that it bears the marks of a divine original. Volumes have been written on its internal proofs, on the coincidence of its purposes and spirit with our highest conceptions of God. How common too is it, to say of other religions, that they are at war with the divine nature, with God's rectitude and goodness, and that we want no other proofs of their falsehood. And what does all this reasoning imply? Clearly this, that we are capable of determining, in many cases, what is worthy and what is unworthy of God, what accords with and what opposes his moral attributes. Deny us this capacity, and it would be no presumption against a professed revelation, that it ascribed to the Supreme Being the most detest-

Hosted by Google

able practices. It might still be said in support of such a system, that it is arrogant in man to determine what kind of revelation suits the character of the Creator. Christianity then leans, at least in part, and some think chiefly, on internal evidence, or on its agreeableness to God's moral attributes; and is it probable, that this religion, having this foundation, contains representations of God's government which shock our ideas of rectitude, and that it silences our objections by telling us, that we are no judges of what suits or opposes his infinite nature?

We will name one more fact to show, that it is not presumptuous to form these judgments of the Creator. All Christians are accustomed to reason from God's attributes, and to use them as tests of doctrines. In their controversies with one another, they spare no pains to show, that their particular views accord best with the divine perfections, and every sect labors to throw on its adversaries the odium of maintaining what is unworthy of God. Theological writings are filled with such arguments; and yet *we*, it seems, are guilty of awful presumption, when we deny of God principles of administration, against which every pure and good sentiment in our breasts rises in abhorrence.

We shall conclude this discussion with an important inquiry. If God's justice and goodness are consistent with those operations and modes of government, which Calvinism ascribes to him, of what use is our belief in these perfections? What expectations can we found upon them? If it consist with divine rectitude to consign to everlasting misery, beings who have come guilty and impotent from his hand, we beg to know what interest we have in this rectitude, what pledge of good

Hosted by Google

it contains, or what evil can be imagined which may not be its natural result? If justice and goodness, when stretched to infinity, take such strange forms and appear in such unexpected and apparently inconsistent operations, how are we sure, that they will not give up the best men to ruin, and leave the universe to the powers of darkness? Such results indeed seem incompatible with these attributes, but not more so than the acts attributed to God by Calvinism. Is it said, that the divine faithfulness is pledged in the Scriptures to a happier issue of things? But why should not divine faithfulness transcend our poor understandings as much as divine goodness and justice, and why may not God, consistently with this attribute, crush every hope which his word has raised? Thus all the divine perfections are lost to us as grounds of encouragement and consolation, if we maintain, that their infinity places them beyond our judgment, and that we must expect from them measures and operations entirely opposed to what seems to us most accordant with their nature.

We have thus endeavoured to show, that the testimony of our rational and moral faculties against Calvinism is worthy of trust. — We know that this reasoning will be met by the question, What then becomes of Christianity? for this religion plainly teaches the doctrines you have condemned. Our answer is ready. Christianity contains no such doctrines. Christianity, reason, and conscience are perfectly harmonious on the subject under discussion. Our religion, fairly construed, gives no countenance to that system, which has arrogated to itself the distinction of Evangelical. We cannot, however, enter this field at present. We will only say, that the general spirit of Christianity affords a very strong presumption,

Hosted by Google

that its records teach no such doctrines as we have opposed. This spirit is love, charity, benevolence. Christianity, we all agree, is designed to manifest God as perfect benevolence, and to bring men to love and imitate him. Now is it probable, that a religion, having this object, gives views of the Supreme Being, from which our moral convictions and benevolent sentiments shrink with horror, and which, if made our pattern, would convert us into monsters! It is plain, that, were a human parent to form himself on the universal Father, as described by Calvinism, that is, were he to bring his children into life totally depraved, and then to pursue them with endless punishment, we should charge him with a cruelty not surpassed in the annals of the world; or, were a sovereign to incapacitate his subjects in any way whatever for obeying his laws, and then to torture them in dungeons of perpetual woe, we should say, that history records no darker crime. And is it probable, that a religion, which aims to attract and assimilate us to God, considered as love, should hold him up to us in these heart-withering characters? We may confidently expect to find in such a system the brightest views of the divine nature; and the same objections lie against interpretations of its records, which savour of cruelty and injustice, as lie against the literal sense of passages which ascribe to God bodily wants and organs. Let the Scriptures be read with a recollection of the spirit of Christianity, and with that modification of particular texts by this general spirit, which a just criticism requires, and Calvinism would no more enter the mind of the reader, than Popery, we had almost said, than Heathenism.

In the remarks now made, it will be seen, we hope,

Hosted by Google

that we have aimed to expose doctrines, not to condemn their professors. It is true, that men are apt to think themselves assailed, when their system only is called to account. But we have no foe but error. We are less and less disposed to measure the piety of others by peculiarities of faith. Men's characters are determined, not by the opinions which they profess, but by those on which their thoughts habitually fasten, which recur to them most forcibly, and which color their ordinary views of God and duty. The creed of habit, imitation, or fear, may be defended stoutly, and yet have little practical influence. The mind, when compelled by education or other circumstances to receive irrational doctrines, has yet a power of keeping them, as it were, on its surface, of excluding them from its depths, of refusing to incorporate them with its own being; and, when burdened with a mixed, incongruous system, it often discovers a sagacity, which reminds us of the instinct of inferior animals, in selecting the healthful and nutritious portions, and in making them its daily food. Accordingly the real faith often corresponds little with that which is professed. It often happens, that, through the progress of the mind in light and virtue, opinions, once central, are gradually thrown outward, lose their vitality, and cease to be principles of action, whilst through habit they are defended as articles of faith. The words of the creed survive, but its advocates sympathize with it little more than its foes. These remarks are particularly applicable to the present subject. A large number, perhaps a majority of those, who surname themselves with the name of Calvin, have little more title to it than ourselves. They keep the name, and drop the principles which it signifies. They adhere to the system as

Hosted by Google

a whole, but shrink from all its parts and distinguishing points. This silent but real defection from Calvinism is spreading more and more widely. The grim features of this system are softening, and its stern spirit yielding to conciliation and charity. We beg our readers to consult for themselves the two Catechisms and the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, and to compare these standards of Calvinism, with what now bears its name. They will rejoice, we doubt not, in the triumphs of truth. With these views, we have no disposition to disparage the professors of the system which we condemn, although we believe that its influence is yet so extensive and pernicious as to bind us to oppose it.

Calvinism, we are persuaded, is giving place to better views. It has passed its meridian, and is sinking, to rise no more. It has to contend with foes more formidable than theologians, with foes, from whom it cannot shield itself in mystery and metaphysical subtilties, we mean with the progress of the human mind, and with the progress of the spirit of the Gospel. Society is going forward in intelligence and charity, and of course is leaving the theology of the sixteenth century behind it. We hail this revolution of opinion as a most auspicious event to the Christian cause. We hear much at present of efforts to spread the Gospel. But Christianity is gaining more by the removal of degrading errors, than it would by armies of missionaries who should carry with them a corrupted form of the religion. We think the decline of Calvinism one of the most encouraging facts in our passing history ; for this system, by outraging conscience and reason, tends to array these high faculties against revelation. Its errors are peculiarly mournful, because they relate to the character of

Hosted by Google

God. It darkens and stains his pure nature; spoils his character of its sacredness, loveliness, glory; and thus quenches the central light of the universe, makes existence a curse, and the extinction of it a consummation devoutly to be wished. We now speak of the *peculiarities* of this system, and of their natural influence, when not counteracted, as they always are in a greater or less degree, by better views, derived from the spirit and plain lessons of Christianity.

We have had so much to do with our subject, that we have neglected to make the usual extracts from the book which we proposed to review. We earnestly wish, that a work, answering to the title of this, which should give us "a general view of Christian doctrines," might be undertaken by a powerful hand. Next to a good commentary on the Scriptures, it would be the best service which could be rendered to Christian truth.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

REMARKS

ON

NATIONAL LITERATURE.

REVIEW of a Discourse concerning the INFLUENCE OF AMERICA ON THE MIND; being the Annual Oration delivered before the American Philosophical Society, at the University in Philadelphia, October 18, 1823. By C. J. Ingersoll.

WE shall use the work prefixed to this article, as ministers are sometimes said to use their texts. We shall make it a point to start from, not the subject of our remarks. Our purpose is to treat of the importance and means of a National Literature. The topic seems to us a great one, and to have intimate connexions with morals and religion, as well as with all our public interests. Our views will be given with great freedom, and, if they serve no other purpose than to recommend the subject to more general attention, one of our principal objects will be accomplished.

We begin with stating what we mean by national literature. We mean the expression of a nation's mind in writing. We mean the production among a people of important works in philosophy, and in the departments of imagination and taste. We mean the contri-

Hosted by Google

butions of new truths to the stock of human knowledge We mean the thoughts of profound and original minds, elaborated by the toil of composition, and fixed and made immortal in books. We mean the manifestation of a nation's intellect in the only forms by which it can multiply itself at home, and send itself abroad. We mean that a nation shall take a place, by its authors, among the lights of the world. It will be seen, that we include under literature all the writings of superior minds, be the subjects what they may. We are aware that the term is often confined to compositions which relate to human nature, and human life; that it is not generally extended to physical science; that mind, not matter, is regarded as its main subject and sphere. But the worlds of matter and mind are too intimately connected to admit of exact partition. All the objects of human thought flow into one another. Moral and physical truths have many bonds and analogies, and, whilst the former are the chosen and noblest themes of literature, we are not anxious to divorce them from the latter, or to shut them up in a separate department. The expression of superior mind in writing, we regard, then, as a nation's literature. We regard its gifted men, whether devoted to the exact sciences, to mental and ethical philosophy, to history and legislation, or to fiction and poetry, as forming a noble intellectual brotherhood, and it is for the purpose of quickening all to join their labors for the public good, that we offer the present plea in behalf of a national literature.

To show the importance which we attach to the subject, we begin with some remarks on what we deem the distinction which a nation should most earnestly covet. We believe, that more distinct apprehensions on this

Hosted by Google

point are needed, and that, for want of them, the work of improvement is carried on with less energy, consistency, and wisdom, than may and should be brought to bear upon it. The great distinction of a country, then, is, that it produces superior men. Its natural advantages are not to be disdained. But they are of secondary importance. No matter what races of animals a country breeds. The great question is, Does it breed a noble race of men? No matter what its soil may be. The great question is, How far is it prolific of moral and intellectual power? No matter how stern its climate is, if it nourish force of thought and virtuous purpose. These are the products by which a country is to be tried, and institutions have value only by the impulse which they give to the mind. It has sometimes been said, that the noblest men grow where nothing else will grow. This we do not believe, for mind is not the creature of climate or soil. But were it true, we should say, that it were better to live among rocks and sands, than in the most genial and productive region on the face of the earth.

As yet, the great distinction of a nation on which we have insisted, has been scarcely recognised. The idea of forming a superior race of men has entered little into schemes of policy. Invention and effort have been expended on matter, much more than on mind. Lofty piles have been reared; the earth has groaned under pyramids and palaces. The thought of building up a nobler order of intellect and character, has hardly crossed the most adventurous statesman. We beg that we may not be misapprehended. We offer these remarks to correct what we deem a disproportioned attention to physical good, and not at all to condemn the

Hosted by Google

expenditure of ingenuity and strength on the outward world. There is a harmony between all our great interests, between inward and outward improvements; and, by establishing among them a wise order, all will be secured. We have no desire to shut up man in his own spiritual nature. The mind was made to act on matter, and it grows by expressing itself in material forms. We believe, too, that, in proportion as it shall gain intellectual and moral power, it will exert itself with increased energy and delight on the outward creation; will pour itself forth more freely in useful and ornamental arts; will rear more magnificent structures, and will call forth new beauties in nature. An intelligent and resolute spirit in a community, perpetually extends its triumphs over matter. It can even subject to itself the most unpromising region. Holland, diked from the ocean, — Venice, rising amidst the waves, — and New England, bleak and rock-bound New England, converted by a few generations from a wilderness into smiling fields and opulent cities, — point us to the mind as the great source of physical good, and teach us, that, in making the culture of man our highest end, we shall not retard, but advance, the cultivation of nature.

The question which we most solicitously ask about this country is, what race of men it is likely to produce. We consider its liberty of value only as far as it favors the growth of men. What is liberty? The removal of restraint from human powers. Its benefit is, that it opens new fields for action, and a wider range for the mind. The only freedom worth possessing, is that which gives enlargement to a people's energy, intellect, and virtues. The savage makes his boast of freedom. But what is its worth? Free as he is, he

Hosted by Google

continues for ages in the same ignorance, leads the same comfortless life, sees the same untamed wilderness spread around him. He is indeed free from what he calls the yoke of civil institutions. But other and worse chains bind him. The very privation of civil government is in effect a chain; for, by withholding protection from property, it virtually shackles the arm of industry, and forbids exertion for the melioration of his lot. Progress, the growth of power, is the end and boon of liberty; and, without this, a people may have the name, but want the substance and spirit of freedom.

We are the more earnest in enlarging on these views, because we feel that our attachment to our country must be very much proportioned to what we deem its tendency to form a generous race of men. We pretend not to have thrown off national feeling; but we have some stronger feelings. We love our country much, but mankind more. As men and Christians, our first desire is to see the improvement of human nature. We desire to see the soul of man wiser, firmer, nobler, more conscious of its imperishable treasures, more beneficent and powerful, more alive to its connexion with God, more able to use pleasure and prosperity aright, and more victorious over poverty, adversity, and pain. In our survey of our own and other countries, the great question which comes to us is this, Where and under what institutions are men most likely to advance? Where are the soundest minds and the purest hearts formed? What nation possesses, in its history, its traditions, its government, its religion, its manners, its pursuits, its relations to other communities, and especially in its private and public means of education, the instruments and pledges of a more resolute virtue and devo-

Hosted by Google

tion to truth, than we now witness? Such a nation, be it where it may, will engage our warmest interest. We love our country, but not blindly. In all nations we recognise one great family, and our chief wish for our native land is, that it may take the first rank among the lights and benefactors of the human race.

These views will explain the vast importance which we attach to a national literature. By this, as we have said, we understand the expression of a nation's mind in writing. It is the action of the most gifted understandings on the community. It throws into circulation through a wide sphere the most quickening and beautiful thoughts, which have grown up in men of laborious study or creative genius. It is a much higher work than the communication of a gifted intellect in discourse. It is the mind giving to multitudes whom no voice can reach, its compressed and selected thoughts, in the most lucid order and attractive forms which it is capable of inventing. In other words, literature is the concentration of intellect for the purpose of spreading itself abroad and multiplying its energy.

Such being the nature of literature, it is plainly among the most powerful methods of exalting the character of a nation, of forming a better race of men; in truth, we apprehend that it may claim the first rank among the means of improvement. We know nothing so fitted to the advancement of society, as to bring its higher minds to bear upon the multitude; as to establish close connexions between the more and less gifted; as to spread far and wide the light which springs up in meditative, profound, and sublime understandings. It is the ordinance of God, and one of his most benevolent laws, that the human race should be carried

Hosted by Google

forward by impulses which originate in a few minds, perhaps in an individual; and in this way the most interesting relations and dependencies of life are framed. When a great truth is to be revealed, it does not flash at once on the race, but dawns and brightens on a superior understanding, from which it is to emanate and to illumine future ages. On the faithfulness of great minds to this awful function, the progress and happiness of men chiefly depend. The most illustrious benefactors of the race have been men, who, having risen to great truths, have held them as a sacred trust for their kind, and have borne witness to them amidst general darkness, under scorn and persecution, perhaps in the face of death. Such men, indeed, have not always made contributions to literature, for their condition has not allowed them to be authors; but we owe the transmission, perpetuity, and immortal power of their new and high thoughts, to kindred spirits, which have concentrated and fixed them in books.

The quickening influences of literature need not be urged on those who are familiar with the history of modern Europe, and who of course know the spring given to the human mind by the revival of ancient learning. Through their writings, the great men of antiquity have exercised a sovereignty over these later ages, not enjoyed in their own. It is more important to observe, that the influence of literature is perpetually increasing; for, through the press and the spread of education, its sphere is indefinitely enlarged. Reading, once the privilege of a few, is now the occupation of multitudes, and is to become one of the chief gratifications of all. Books penetrate everywhere, and some of the works of genius find their way to obscure dwellings, which, a

Hosted by Google

little while ago, seemed barred against all intellectual light. Writing is now the mightiest instrument on earth. Through this, the mind has acquired a kind of omnipresence. To literature we then look, as the chief means of forming a better race of human beings. To superior minds, which may act through this, we look for the impulses, by which their country is to be carried forward. We would teach them, that they are the depositaries of the highest power on earth, and that on them the best hopes of society rest.

We are aware that some may think, that we are exalting intellectual above moral and religious influence. They may tell us that the teaching of moral and religious truth, not by philosophers and boasters of wisdom, but by the comparatively weak and foolish, is the great means of renovating the world. This truth we indeed regard as "the power of God unto salvation." But let none imagine that its chosen temple is an uncultivated mind, and that it selects, as its chief organs, the lips of the unlearned. Religious and moral truth is indeed appointed to carry forward mankind; but not as conceived and expounded by narrow minds, not as darkened by the ignorant, not as debased by the superstitious, not as subtilized by the visionary, not as thundered out by the intolerant fanatic, not as turned into a drivelling cant by the hypocrite. Like all other truths, it requires for its full reception and powerful communication, a free and vigorous intellect. Indeed, its grandeur and infinite connexions demand a more earnest and various use of our faculties than any other subject. As a single illustration of this remark, we may observe, that all moral and religious truth may be reduced to one great and central thought, Perfection of Mind; a thought

Hosted by Google

which comprehends all that is glorious in the Divine nature, and which reveals to us the end and happiness of our own existence. This perfection has as yet only dawned on the most gifted human beings, and the great purpose of our present and future existence is, to enlarge our conceptions of it without end, and to embody and make them manifest in character and life. And is this sublime thought to grow within us, to refine itself from error and impure mixture, to receive perpetual accessions of brightness from the study of God, man, and nature, and especially to be communicated powerfully to others, without the vigorous exertion of our intellectual nature? Religion has been wronged by nothing more, than by being separated from intellect; than by being removed from the province of reason and free research, into that of mystery and authority, of impulse and feeling. Hence it is, that the prevalent forms or exhibitions of Christianity are comparatively inert, and that most which is written on the subject is of little or no worth. Christianity was given, not to contradict and degrade the rational nature, but to call it forth, to enlarge its range and its powers. It admits of endless developement. It is the last truth which should remain stationary. It ought to be so explored and so expressed, as to take the highest place in a nation's literature, as to exalt and purify all other literature. From these remarks it will be seen, that the efficacy which we have ascribed to literary or intellectual influence in the work of human improvement, is consistent with the supreme importance of moral and religious truth.

If we have succeeded in conveying the impressions which we have aimed to make, our readers are now prepared to inquire with interest into the condition and

Hosted by Google

prospects of literature among ourselves. Do we possess, indeed, what may be called a national literature? Have we produced eminent writers in the various departments of intellectual effort? Are our chief resources of instruction and literary enjoyment furnished from ourselves? We regret that the reply to these questions is so obvious. The few standard works which we have produced, and which promise to live, can hardly, by any courtesy, be denominated a national literature. On this point, if marks and proofs of our real condition were needed, we should find them in the current apologies for our deficiencies. Our writers are accustomed to plead in our excuse, our youth, the necessities of a newly settled country, and the direction of our best talents to practical life. Be the pleas sufficient or not, one thing they prove, and that is, our consciousness of having failed to make important contributions to the interests of the intellect. We have few names to place by the side of the great names in science and literature on the other side of the ocean. We want those lights which make a country conspicuous at a distance. Let it not be said, that European envy denies our just claims. In an age like this, when the literary world forms a great family, and the products of mind are circulated more rapidly than those of machinery, it is a nation's own fault, if its name be not pronounced with honor beyond itself. We have ourselves heard, and delighted to hear, beyond the Alps, our country designated as the land of Franklin. This name had scaled that mighty barrier, and made us known where our institutions and modes of life were hardly better understood than those of the natives of our forests.

We are accustomed to console ourselves for the ab-

Hosted by Google

sence of a commanding literature, by urging our superiority to other nations in our institutions for the diffusion of elementary knowledge through all classes of the community. We have here just cause for boasting, though perhaps less than we imagine. That there are gross deficiencies in our common schools, and that the amount of knowledge which they communicate, when compared with the time spent in its acquisition, is lamentably small, the community begin to feel. There is a crying need for a higher and more quickening kind of instruction than the laboring part of society have yet received, and we rejoice that the cry begins to be heard. But, allowing our elementary institutions to be ever so perfect, we confess that they do not satisfy us. We want something more. A dead level of intellect, even if it should rise above what is common in other nations, would not answer our wishes and hopes for our country. We want great minds to be formed among us, minds which shall be felt afar, and through which we may act on the world. We want the human intellect to do its utmost here. We want this people to obtain a claim on the gratitude of the human race, by adding strength to the foundation, and fulness and splendor to the developement of moral and religious truth; by originality of thought, by discoveries of science, and by contributions to the refining pleasures of taste and imagination.

With these views we do and must lament, that, however we surpass other nations in providing for, and spreading elementary instruction, we fall behind many in provision for the liberal training of the intellect, for forming great scholars, for communicating that profound knowledge, and that thirst for higher truths, which can alone originate a commanding literature. The truth ought to

Hosted by Google

be known. There is among us much superficial knowledge, but little severe, persevering research; little of that consuming passion for new truth, which makes outward things worthless; little resolute devotion to a high intellectual culture. There is nowhere a literary atmosphere, or such an accumulation of literary influence, as determines the whole strength of the mind to its own enlargement, and to the manifestation of itself in enduring forms. Few among us can be said to have followed out any great subject of thought patiently, laboriously, so as to know thoroughly what others have discovered and taught concerning it, and thus to occupy a ground from which new views may be gained. Of course, exceptions are to be found. This country has produced original and profound thinkers. We have named Franklin, and we may name Edwards, one of the greatest men of his age, though unhappily his mind was lost, in a great degree, to literature, and we fear to religion, by vassalage to a false theology. His work on the Will throws, indeed, no light on human nature, and, notwithstanding the nobleness of the subject, gives no great or elevated thoughts; but, as a specimen of logical acuteness and controversial power, it certainly ranks in the very highest class of metaphysical writings. We might also name living authors who do honor to their country. Still, we may say, we chiefly prize what has been done among us, as a promise of higher and more extensive effort. Patriotism, as well as virtue, forbids us to burn incense to national vanity. The truth should be seen and felt. In an age of great intellectual activity, we rely chiefly for intellectual excitement and enjoyment on foreign minds, nor is our own mind felt abroad. Whilst clamoring against dependence on European manufac-

Hosted by Google

tures, we contentedly rely on Europe for the nobler and more important fabrics of the intellect. We boast of our political institutions, and receive our chief teachings, books, impressions, from the school of monarchy. True, we labor under disadvantages. But, if our liberty deserves the praise which it receives, it is more than a balance for these. We believe that it is. We believe that it does open to us an indefinite intellectual progress. Did we not so regard it, we should value it little. If hereditary governments minister most to the growth of the mind, it were better to restore them than to cling to a barren freedom. Let us not expose liberty to this reproach. Let us prove, by more generous provisions for the diffusion of elementary knowledge, for the training of great minds, and for the joint culture of the moral and intellectual powers, that we are more and more instructed, by freedom, in the worth and greatness of human nature, and in the obligation of contributing to its strength and glory.

We have spoken of the condition of our literature. We now proceed to the consideration of the causes which obstruct its advancement; and we are immediately struck by one so prevalent, as to deserve distinct notice. We refer to the common doctrine, that we need, in this country, useful knowledge, rather than profound, extensive, and elegant literature, and that this last, if we covet it, may be imported from abroad in such variety and abundance, as to save us the necessity of producing it among ourselves. How far are these opinions just? This question we purpose to answer.

That useful knowledge should receive our first and chief care, we mean not to dispute. But in our views of utility, we may differ from some who take this po-

Hosted by Google

sition. There are those who confine this term to the necessaries and comforts of life, and to the means of producing them. And is it true, that we need no knowledge, but that which clothes and feeds us? Is it true, that all studies may be dispensed with, but such as teach us to act on matter, and to turn it to our use? Happily, human nature is too stubborn to yield to this narrow utility. It is interesting to observe how the very mechanical arts, which are especially designed to minister to the necessities and comforts of life, are perpetually passing these limits; how they disdain to stop at mere convenience. A large and increasing proportion of mechanical labor is given to the gratification of an elegant taste. How simple would be the art of building, if it limited itself to the construction of a comfortable shelter! How many ships should we dismantle, and how many busy trades put to rest, were dress and furniture reduced to the standard of convenience! This "utility" would work a great change in town and country, would level to the dust the wonders of architecture, would annihilate the fine arts, and blot out innumerable beauties, which the hand of taste has spread over the face of the earth. Happily, human nature is too strong for the utilitarian. It cannot satisfy itself with the convenient. No passion unfolds itself sooner than the love of the ornamental. The savage decorates his person, and the child is more struck with the beauty than the uses of its raiment. So far from limiting ourselves to convenient food and raiment, we enjoy but little a repast which is not arranged with some degree of order and taste; and a man who should consult comfort alone in his wardrobe, would find himself an unwelcome guest in circles which he would very reluctantly forego. We

Hosted by Google

are aware that the propensity to which we have referred, often breaks out in extravagance and ruinous luxury. We know that the love of ornament is often vitiated by vanity, and that, when so perverted, it impairs, sometimes destroys, the soundness and simplicity of the mind and the relish for true glory. Still it teaches, even in its excesses, that the idea of beauty is an indestructible principle of our nature, and this single truth is enough to put us on our guard against vulgar notions of utility.

We have said that we prize, as highly as any, useful knowledge. But by this we mean knowledge which answers and ministers to our complex and various nature; we mean that which is useful, not only to the animal man, but to the intellectual, moral, and religious man; useful to a being of spiritual faculties, whose happiness is to be found in their free and harmonious exercise. We grant, that there is primary necessity for that information and skill by which subsistence is earned, and life is preserved; for it is plain that we must live, in order to act and improve. But life is the means; action and improvement the end; and who will deny that the noblest utility belongs to that knowledge, by which the chief purpose of our creation is accomplished? According to these views, a people should honor and cultivate, as unspeakably useful, that literature which corresponds to, and calls forth, the highest faculties; which expresses and communicates energy of thought, fruitfulness of invention, force of moral purpose, a thirst for the true, and a delight in the beautiful. According to these views, we attach special importance to those branches of literature which relate to human nature, and which give it a consciousness of its own powers. History has a noble use, for it shows us human beings in

Hosted by Google

various and opposite conditions, in their strength and weakness, in their progress and relapses, and thus reveals the causes and means by which the happiness and virtue of the race may be enlarged. Poetry is useful, by touching deep springs in the human soul; by giving voice to its more delicate feelings; by breathing out, and making more intelligible, the sympathy which subsists between the mind and the outward universe; by creating beautiful forms of manifestations for great moral truths. Above all, that higher philosophy, which treats of the intellectual and moral constitution of man, of the foundation of knowledge, of duty, of perfection, of our relations to the spiritual world, and especially to God; this has a usefulness so peculiar as to throw other departments of knowledge into obscurity; and a people, among whom this does not find honor, has little ground to boast of its superiority to uncivilized tribes. It will be seen from these remarks, that utility, with us, has a broad meaning. In truth, we are slow to condemn as useless, any researches or discoveries of original and strong minds, even when we discern in them no bearing on any interests of mankind; for all truth is of a prolific nature, and has connexions not immediately perceived; and it may be, that what we call vain speculations, may, at no distant period, link themselves with some new facts or theories, and guide a profound thinker to the most important results. The ancient mathematician, when absorbed in solitary thought, little imagined that his theorems, after the lapse of ages, were to be applied by the mind of Newton to the solution of the mysteries of the universe, and not only to guide the astronomer through the heavens, but the navigator through the pathless ocean. For ourselves, we incline to hope much

Hosted by Google

from truths, which are particularly decried as useless; for the noblest and most useful truth is of an abstract or universal nature; and yet the abstract, though susceptible of infinite application, is generally, as we know, opposed to the practical.

We maintain, that a people, which has any serious purpose of taking a place among improved communities, should studiously promote within itself every variety of intellectual exertion. It should resolve strenuously to be surpassed by none. It should feel that mind is the creative power, through which all the resources of nature are to be turned to account, and by which a people is to spread its influence, and establish the noblest form of empire. It should train within itself men able to understand and to use whatever is thought and discovered over the whole earth. The whole mass of human knowledge should exist among a people, not in neglected libraries, but in its higher minds. Among its most cherished institutions, should be those, which will ensure to it ripe scholars, explorers of ancient learning, profound historians and mathematicians, intellectual laborers devoted to physical and moral science, and to the creation of a refined and beautiful literature.

Let us not be misunderstood. We have no desire to rear in our country a race of pedants, of solemn triflers, of laborious commentators on the mysteries of a Greek accent or a rusty coin. We would have men explore antiquity, not to bury themselves in its dust, but to learn its spirit, and so to commune with its superior minds, as to accumulate on the present age, the influences of whatever was great and wise in former times. What we want is, that those among us, whom God has gifted to comprehend whatever is now known,

Hosted by Google

and to rise to new truths, may find aids and institutions to fit them for their high calling, and may become at once springs of a higher intellectual life to their own country, and joint workers with the great of all nations and times in carrying forward their race.

We know that it will be said, that foreign scholars, bred under institutions which this country cannot support, may do our intellectual work, and send us books and learning to meet our wants. To this we have much to answer. In the first place, we reply, that, to avail ourselves of the higher literature of other nations, we must place ourselves on a level with them. The products of foreign machinery we can use, without any portion of the skill that produced them. But works of taste and genius, and profound investigations of philosophy, can only be estimated and enjoyed through a culture and power corresponding to that from which they sprung.

In the next place, we maintain, that it is an immense gain to a people, to have in its own bosom, among its own sons, men of distinguished intellect. Such men give a spring and life to a community by their presence, their society, their fame; and what deserves remark, such men are nowhere so felt as in a republic like our own; for here the different classes of society flow together and act powerfully on each other, and a free communication, elsewhere unknown, is established between the gifted few and the many. It is one of the many good fruits of liberty, that it increases the diffusiveness of intellect; and accordingly a free country is, above all others, false to itself, in withholding from its superior minds the means of enlargement.

We next observe, and we think the observation im-

Hosted by Google

portant, that the facility with which we receive the literature of foreign countries, instead of being a reason for neglecting our own, is a strong motive for its cultivation. We mean not to be paradoxical, but we believe that it would be better to admit no books from abroad, than to make them substitutes for our own intellectual activity. The more we receive from other countries, the greater the need of an original literature. A people, into whose minds the thoughts of foreigners are poured perpetually, needs an energy within itself to resist, to modify this mighty influence, and, without it, will inevitably sink under the worst bondage, will become intellectually tame and enslaved. We have certainly no desire to complete our restrictive system, by adding to it a literary non-intercourse law. We rejoice in the increasing intellectual connexion between this country and the old world. But sooner would we rupture it, than see our country sitting passively at the feet of foreign teachers. It were better to have no literature, than form ourselves unresistingly on a foreign one. The true sovereigns of a country are those who determine its mind, its modes of thinking, its tastes, its principles; and we cannot consent to lodge this sovereignty in the hands of strangers. A country, like an individual, has dignity and power only in proportion as it is self-formed. There is a great stir to secure to ourselves the manufacturing of our own clothing. We say, let others spin and weave for us, but let them not think for us. A people, whose government and laws are nothing but the embodying of public opinion, should jealously guard this opinion against foreign dictation. We need a literature to counteract, and to use wisely the literature which we import. We need an inward power proportionate

Hosted by Google

to that which is exerted on us, as the means of self-subsistence. It is particularly true of a people, whose institutions demand for their support a free and bold spirit, that they should be able to subject to a manly and independent criticism, whatever comes from abroad. These views seem to us to deserve serious attention. We are more and more a reading people. Books are already among the most powerful influences here. The question is, shall Europe, through these, fashion us after its pleasure? Shall America be only an echo of what is thought and written under the aristocracies beyond the ocean?

Another view of the subject is this. A foreign literature will always, in a measure, be foreign. It has sprung from the soul of another people, which, however like, is still not our own soul. Every people has much in its own character and feelings, which can only be embodied by its own writers, and which, when transfused through literature, makes it touching and true, like the voice of our earliest friend.

We now proceed to an argument in favor of native literature, which, if less obvious, is, we believe, not less sound than those now already adduced. We have hitherto spoken of literature as the expression, the communication, of the higher minds in a community. We now add, that it does much more than is commonly supposed, to *form* such minds, so that, without it, a people wants one of the chief means of educating or perfecting talent and genius. One of the great laws of our nature, and a law singularly important to social beings, is, that the intellect enlarges and strengthens itself by expressing worthily its best views. In this, as in other respects, it is more blessed to give than to receive

Hosted by Google

Superior minds are formed, not merely by solitary thought, but almost as much by communication. Great thoughts are never fully possessed, till he who has conceived them has given them fit utterance. One of the noblest and most invigorating labors of genius is, to clothe its conceptions in clear and glorious forms, to give them existence in other souls. Thus literature creates, as well as manifests, intellectual power, and, without it, the highest minds will never be summoned to the most invigorating action.

We doubt whether a man ever brings his faculties to bear with their whole force on a subject, until he writes upon it for the instruction or gratification of others. To place it clearly before others, he feels the necessity of viewing it more vividly himself. By attempting to seize his thoughts, and fix them in an enduring form, he finds them vague and unsatisfactory, to a degree which he did not suspect, and toils for a precision and harmony of views, of which he never before felt the need. He places his subject in new lights; submits it to a searching analysis; compares and connects with it his various knowledge; seeks for it new illustrations and analogies; weighs objections; and, through these processes, often arrives at higher truths than he at first aimed to illustrate. Dim conceptions grow bright. Glorious thoughts, which had darted as meteors through the mind, are arrested, and gradually shine with a sun-like splendor, with prolific energy, on the intellect and heart. It is one of the chief distinctions of a great mind, that it is prone to rush into twilight regions, and to catch faint glimmerings of distant and unbounded prospects; and nothing perhaps aids it more to pierce the shadows which surround it, than the labor to un-

Hosted by Google

fold to other minds the indistinct conceptions which have dawned on its own. Even where composition yields no such fruits, it is still a great intellectual help. It always favors comprehensive and systematical views The laborious distribution of a great subject, so as to assign to each part or topic its just position and due proportion, is singularly fitted to give compass and persevering force of thought.

If we confine ourselves simply to the consideration of style, we shall have reason to think that a people among whom this is neglected, wants one important intellectual aid. In this, great power is exerted, and by exertion increased. To the multitude, indeed, language seems so natural an instrument, that to use it with clearness and energy seems no great effort. It is framed, they think, to the writer's hand, and so continually employed as to need little thought or skill. But in nothing is the creative power of a gifted writer seen more than in his style. True, his words may be found in the dictionary. But there they lie disjointed and dead. What a wonderful life does he breathe into them by compacting them into his sentences! Perhaps he uses no term which has not been hackneyed by ordinary writers; and yet with these vulgar materials what miracles does he achieve! What a world of thought does he condense into a phrase! By new combinations of common words, what delicate hues or what a blaze of light does he pour over his subject! Power of style depends very little on the structure or copiousness of the language which the writer of genius employs, but chiefly, if not wholly, on his own mind. The words, arranged in his dictionary, are no more fitted to depict his thoughts, than the block of marble in the sculptor's shop, to

Hosted by Google

show forth the conceptions which are dawning in his mind. Both are inert materials. The power, which pervades them, comes from the soul; and the same creative energy is manifested in the production of a noble style, as in extracting beautiful forms from lifeless stone. How unfaithful, then, is a nation to its own intellect, in which grace and force of style receive no culture.

The remarks now made on the importance of literature as a means of educating talent and genius, we are aware, do not apply equally to all subjects or kinds of knowledge. In the exact or physical sciences, a man may acquire much without composition, and may make discoveries without registering them. Even here, however, we believe, that, by a systematic developement of his views in a luminous style, he will bring great aid to his own faculties, as well as to others'. It is on the vast subjects of morals and human nature, that the mind especially strengthens itself by elaborate composition; and these, let it be remembered, form the staple of the highest literature. Moral truth, under which we include every thing relating to mind and character, is of a refined and subtile, as well as elevated nature, and requires the joint and full exercise of discrimination, invention, imagination, and sensibility, to give it effectual utterance. A writer, who would make it visible and powerful, must strive to join an austere logic to a fervent eloquence; must place it in various lights; must create for it interesting forms; must wed it to beauty; must illuminate it by similitudes and contrasts; must show its correspondence with the outward world; perhaps must frame for it a vast machinery of fiction. How invigorating are these efforts! Yet it is only in writing, in elaborate composition, that they are deliberately called

Hosted by Google

forth and sustained, and without literature they would almost cease. It may be said of many truths, that greater intellectual energy is required to express them with effect, than to conceive them; so that a nation, which does not encourage this expression, impoverishes so far its own mind. Take, for example, Shakspeare's Hamlet. This is a developement of a singularly interesting view of human nature. It shows us a mind, to which life is a burden; in which the powers of meditation and feeling are disproportioned to the active powers; which sinks under its own weight, under the consciousness of wanting energies commensurate with its visions of good, with its sore trials, and with the solemn task which is laid upon it. To conceive clearly this form of human nature, shows indeed the genius of the writer. But what a new power is required to bring it out in such a drama as Shakspeare's; to give it life and action; to invent for it circumstances and subordinate characters, fitted to call it forth; to give it tones of truth and nature; to show the hues which it casts over all the objects of thought! This intellectual energy we all perceive; and this was not merely *manifested* in Shakspeare's work, but, without such a work, it would not have been awakened. His invention would have slumbered, had he not desired to give forth his mind, in a visible and enduring form. Thus literature is the nurse of genius. Through this, genius learns its own strength, and continually accumulates it; and of course, in a country without literature, genius, however liberally bestowed by the Creator, will languish, and will fail to fulfil its great duty of quickening the mass amidst which it lives.

We come now to our last, and what we deem a

Hosted by Google

weighty argument in favor of a native literature. We desire and would cherish it, because we hope from it important aids to the cause of truth and human nature. We believe, that a literature, springing up in this new soil, would bear new fruits, and, in some respects, more precious fruits, than are elsewhere produced. We know that our hopes may be set down to the account of that national vanity, which, with too much reason, is placed by foreigners among our besetting sins. But we speak from calm and deliberate conviction. We are inclined to believe, that, as a people, we occupy a position, from which the great subjects of literature may be viewed more justly than from those which most other nations hold. Undoubtedly we labor under disadvantages. We want the literary apparatus of Europe; her libraries, her universities, her learned institutions, her race of professed scholars, her spots consecrated by the memory of sages, and a thousand stirring associations which hover over ancient nurseries of learning. But the mind is not a local power. Its spring is within itself, and, under the inspiration of liberal and high feeling, it may attain and worthily express nobler truth than outward helps could reveal.

The great distinction of our country is, that we enjoy some peculiar advantages for understanding our own nature. Man is the great subject of literature, and juster and profounder views of man may be expected here, than elsewhere. In Europe, political and artificial distinctions have, more or less, triumphed over and obscured our common nature. In Europe, we meet kings, nobles, priests, peasants. How much rarer is it to meet *men*; by which we mean, human beings conscious of their own nature, and conscious of the utter worthless-

Hosted by Google

ness of all outward distinctions, compared with what is treasured up in their own souls. Man does not value himself as man. It is for his blood, his rank, or some artificial distinction, and not for the attributes of humanity, that he holds himself in respect. The institutions of the old world all tend to throw obscurity over what we most need to know, and that is, the worth and claims of a human being. We know that great improvements in this respect are going on abroad. Still the many are too often postponed to the few. The mass of men are regarded as instruments to work with, as materials to be shaped for the use of their superiors. That consciousness of our own nature, which contains, as a germ, all nobler thoughts, which teaches us at once self-respect and respect for others, and which binds us to God by filial sentiment and hope, this has been repressed, kept down by establishments founded in force ; and literature, in all its departments, bears, we think, the traces of this inward degradation. We conceive that our position favors a juster and profounder estimate of human nature. We mean not to boast, but there are fewer obstructions to that moral consciousness, that consciousness of humanity, of which we have spoken. Man is not hidden from us by so many disguises as in the old world. The essential equality of all human beings, founded on the possession of a spiritual, progressive, immortal nature, is, we hope, better understood ; and nothing more than this single conviction is needed, to work the mightiest changes in every province of human life and of human thought.

We have stated what seems to us our most important distinction. But our position has other advantages. The mere circumstance of its being a new one, gives reason

Hosted by Google

to hope for some new intellectual activity, some fresher views of nature and life. We are not borne down by the weight of antiquated institutions, time-hallowed abuses, and the remnants of feudal barbarism. The absence of a religious establishment is an immense gain, as far as originality of mind is in question; for an establishment, however advantageous in other respects, is, by its nature, hostile to discovery and progress. To keep the mind where it is, to fasten the notions of one age on all future time, is its aim and proper business; and if it happened, as has generally been the case, to grow up in an age of strife and passion, when, as history demonstrates, the church was overrun with error, it cannot but perpetuate darkness and mental bondage. Among us, intellect, though far from being free, has broken some of the chains of other countries, and is more likely, we conceive, to propose to itself its legitimate object, truth, — everlasting and universal truth.

We have no thought of speaking contemptuously of the literature of the old world. It is our daily nutriment. We feel our debt to be immense to the glorious company of pure and wise minds, which in foreign lands have bequeathed us in writing their choicest thoughts and holiest feelings. Still we feel, that all existing literature has been produced under influences, which have necessarily mixed with it much error and corruption; and that the whole of it ought to pass, and must pass, under rigorous review. For example, we think that the history of the human race is to be re-written. Men imbued with the prejudices which thrive under aristocracies and state religions, cannot understand it. Past ages, with their great events, and great men, are to undergo, we think, a new trial, and to yield new results. It is

Hosted by Google

plain, that history is already viewed under new aspects, and we believe, that the true principles for studying and writing it are to be unfolded here, at least as rapidly as in other countries. It seems to us that in literature an immense work is yet to be done. The most interesting questions to mankind are yet in debate. Great principles are yet to be settled in criticism, in morals, in politics; and, above all, the true character of religion is to be rescued from the disguises and corruptions of ages. We want a reformation. We want a literature, in which genius will pay supreme, if not undivided homage, to truth and virtue; in which the childish admiration of what has been called greatness, will give place to a wise moral judgment; which will breathe reverence for the mind, and elevating thoughts of God. The part which this country is to bear in this great intellectual reform, we presume not to predict. We feel, however, that, if true to itself, it will have the glory and happiness of giving new impulses to the human mind. This is our cherished hope. We should have no heart to encourage native literature, did we not hope that it would become instinct with a new spirit. We cannot admit the thought, that this country is to be only a repetition of the old world. We delight to believe that God, in the fulness of time, has brought a new continent to light, in order that the human mind should move here with a new freedom, should frame new social institutions, should explore new paths, and reap new harvests. We are accustomed to estimate nations by their creative energies, and we shall blush for our country, if, in circumstances so peculiar, original, and creative, it shall satisfy itself with a passive reception and mechanical reiteration of the thoughts of strangers.

Hosted by Google

We have now completed our remarks on the importance of a native literature. The next great topic is, the means of producing it; and here our limits forbid us to enlarge; yet we cannot pass it over in silence. A primary and essential means of the improvement of our literature, is, that, as a people, we should feel its value, should desire it, should demand it, should encourage it, and should give it a hearty welcome. It will come if called for; and, under this conviction, we have now labored to create a want for it in the community. We say, that we must call for it; by which we mean, not merely that we must invite it by good wishes and kind words, but must make liberal provision for intellectual education. We must enlarge our literary institutions, secure more extensive and profound teaching, and furnish helps and resources to men of superior talent for continued, laborious research. As yet, intellectual labor, devoted to a thorough investigation and a full developement of great subjects, is almost unknown among us; and, without it, we shall certainly rear few lasting monuments of thought. We boast of our primary schools. We want universities worthy of the name, where a man of genius and literary zeal may possess himself of all that is yet known, and may strengthen himself by intercourse with kindred minds. We know it will be said, that we cannot afford these. But it is not so. We are rich enough for ostentation, for intemperance, for luxury. We can lavish millions on fashion, on furniture, on dress, on our palaces, on our pleasures; but we have nothing to spend for the mind. Where lies our poverty? In the purse, or in the soul?

We have spoken of improved institutions as essential to an improved literature. We beg, however, not to be

Hosted by Google

misunderstood, as if these were invested with a creating power, or would necessarily yield the results which we desire. They are the means, not causes, of advancement. Literature depends on individual genius, and this, though fostered, cannot be created by outward helps. No human mechanism can produce original thought. After all the attempts to explain by education the varieties of intellect, we are compelled to believe that minds, like all the other products of nature, have original and indestructible differences; that they are not exempted from that great and beautiful law, which joins with strong resemblances as strong diversities; and, of consequence, we believe, that the men who are to be the lights of the world, bring with them their commission and power from God. Still, whilst institutions cannot create, they may and do unfold genius; and, for want of them, great minds often slumber or run to waste, whilst a still larger class, who want genius, but possess admirable powers, fail of that culture, through which they might enjoy and approach their more gifted brethren.

A people, as we have said, are to give aid to literature, by founding wise and enlarged institutions. They may do much more. They may exert a nobler patronage. By cherishing in their own breasts the love of truth, virtue, and freedom, they may do much to nurse and kindle genius in its favored possessors. There is a constant reaction between a community and the great minds which spring up within it, and they form one another. In truth, great minds are developed more by the spirit and character of the people to which they belong, than by all other causes. Thus, a free spirit, a thirst for new and higher knowledge in a community,

Hosted by Google

does infinitely more for literature, than the most splendid benefactions under despotism. A nation under any powerful excitement, becomes fruitful of talent. Among a people called to discuss great questions, to contend for great interests, to make great sacrifices for the public weal, we always find new and unsuspected energies of thought brought out. A mercenary, selfish, luxurious, sensual people, toiling only to secure the pleasures of sloth, will often communicate their own softness and baseness to the superior minds which dwell among them. In this impure atmosphere, the celestial spark burns dim, and well will it be, if God's great gift of genius be not impiously prostituted to lust and crime.

In conformity with the views now stated, we believe that literature is to be carried forward, here and elsewhere, chiefly by some new and powerful impulses communicated to society; and it is a question naturally suggested by this discussion, from what impulse, principle, excitement, the highest action of the mind may now be expected. When we look back, we see that literature has been originated and modified by a variety of principles; by patriotism and national feeling, by reverence for antiquity, by the spirit of innovation, by enthusiasm, by skepticism, by the passion for fame, by romantic love, and by political and religious convulsions. Now we do not expect from these causes any higher action of the mind, than they have yet produced. Perhaps most of them have spent their force. The very improvements of society seem to forbid the manifestation of their former energy. For example, the patriotism of antiquity and the sexual love of chivalrous ages, which inspired so much of the old literature, are now seen to be feverish and vicious excesses of natural principles, and have gone, we trust, never to return.

Hosted by Google

Are we asked, then, to what impulse or power, we look for a higher literature than has yet existed? We answer, to a new action or developement of the religious principle. This remark will probably surprise not a few of our readers. It seems to us, that the energy with which this principle is to act on the intellect, is hardly suspected. Men identify religion with superstition, with fanaticism, with the common forms of Christianity; and seeing it arrayed against intellect, leagued with oppression, fettering inquiry, and incapable of being blended with the sacred dictates of reason and conscience, they see in its progress only new encroachments on free and enlightened thinking. Still, man's relation to God is the great quickening truth, throwing all other truths into insignificance, and a truth which, however obscured and paralyzed by the many errors which ignorance and fraud have hitherto linked with it, has ever been a chief spring of human improvement. We look to it as the true life of the intellect. No man can be just to himself, can comprehend his own existence, can put forth all his powers with an heroic confidence, can deserve to be the guide and inspirer of other minds, till he has risen to communion with the Supreme Mind; till he feels his filial connexion with the Universal Parent; till he regards himself as the recipient and minister of the Infinite Spirit; till he feels his consecration to the ends which religion unfolds; till he rises above human opinion, and is moved by a higher impulse than fame.

From these remarks it will be seen, that our chief hopes of an improved literature rest on our hopes of an improved religion. From the prevalent theology, which has come down to us from the dark ages, we hope

Hosted by Google

nothing It has done its best. All that can grow up under its sad shade has already been brought forth. It wraps the Divine nature and human nature in impenetrable gloom. It overlays Christianity with technical, arbitrary dogmas. True faith is of another lineage. It comes from the same source with reason, conscience, and our best affections, and is in harmony with them all. True faith is essentially a moral conviction; a confidence in the reality and immutableness of moral distinctions; a confidence in disinterested virtue or in spiritual excellence as the supreme good; a confidence in God as its fountain and almighty friend, and in Jesus Christ as having lived and died to breathe it into the soul; a confidence in its power, triumphs, and immortality; a confidence, through which outward changes, obstructions, disasters, sufferings, are overcome, or rather made instruments of perfection. Such a faith, unfolded freely and powerfully, must "work mightily" on the intellect as well as on practice. By revealing to us the supreme purpose of the Creator, it places us, as it were, in the centre of the universe, from which the harmonies, true relations, and brightest aspects of things are discerned. It unites calmness and enthusiasm, and the concord of these seemingly hostile elements is essential to the full and healthy action of the creative powers of the soul. It opens the eye to beauty and the heart to love. Literature, under this influence, will become more ingenuous and single-hearted; will penetrate farther into the soul; will find new interpretations of nature and life; will breathe a martyr's love of truth, tempered with a never-failing charity; and, whilst sympathizing with all human suffering, will still be pervaded by a healthful cheerfulness, and will often break forth

Hosted by Google

in tones of irrepressible joy, responsive to that happiness which fills God's universe.

We cannot close our remarks on the means of an improved literature, without offering one suggestion. We earnestly recommend to our educated men a more extensive acquaintance with the intellectual labors of continental Europe. Our reading is confined too much to English books, and especially to the more recent publications of Great Britain. In this we err. We ought to know the different modes of viewing and discussing great subjects in different nations. We should be able to compare the writings of the highest minds in a great variety of circumstances. Nothing can favor more our own intellectual independence and activity. Let English literature be ever so fruitful and profound, we should still impoverish ourselves by making it our sole nutriment. We fear, however, that at the present moment English books want much which we need. The intellect of that nation is turned now to what are called practical and useful subjects. Physical science goes forward, and what is very encouraging, it is spread with unexampled zeal through all classes of the community. Abuses of government, of the police, of the penal code, of charity, of poor laws, and corn laws, are laboriously explored. General education is improved. Science is applied to the arts with brilliant success. We see much good in progress. But we find little profound or fervid thinking, expressed in the higher forms of literature. The noblest subjects of the intellect receive little attention. We see an almost total indifference to intellectual and moral science. In England there is a great want of philosophy, in the true sense of that word. If we examine her reviews, in which much

Hosted by Google

of the intellectual power of the nation is expended, we meet perpetually a jargon of criticism, which shows a singular want of great and general principles in estimating works of art. We have no ethical work of any living English writer to be compared with that of Degerando, entitled, "*Du Perfectionnement Moral;*" and, although we have little respect for the rash generalizations of the bold and eloquent Cousin, yet the interest which his metaphysics awaken in Paris, is in our estimation a better presage than the lethargy which prevails on such topics in England. In these remarks we have no desire to depreciate the literature of England, which, taken as a whole, we regard as the noblest monument of the human mind. We rejoice in our descent from England, and esteem our free access to her works of science and genius, as among our high privileges. Nor do we feel as if her strength were spent. We see no wrinkles on her brow, no decrepitude in her step. At this moment she has authors, especially in poetry and fiction, whose names are "familiar in our mouths as household words," and who can never perish but with her language. Still we think, that at present her intellect is laboring more for herself than for mankind, and that our scholars, if they would improve our literature, should cultivate an intimacy not only with that of England, but of continental Europe.

We have now finished our remarks on the importance and means of an improved literature among ourselves. Are we asked what we hope in this particular? We answer, much. We see reasons for anticipating an increased and more efficient direction of talent to this object. But on these we cannot enlarge. There is, however, one ground of expectation, to which we will

Hosted by Google

call a moment's attention. We apprehend that literature is to make progress through an important change in society, which civilization and good institutions are making more and more apparent. It seems to us, that, through these causes, political life is less and less regarded as the only or chief sphere for superior minds, and that influence and honor are more and more accumulated in the hands of literary and thinking men. Of consequence, more and more of the intellect of communities is to be drawn to literature. The distinction between antiquity and the present times, in respect to the importance attached to political life, seems to us striking; and it is not an accidental difference, but founded on permanent causes which are to operate with increased power. In ancient times, every thing, abroad and at home, threw men upon the public, and generated an intense thirst for political power. On the contrary, the improvement of later periods inclines men to give importance to literature. For example, the instability of the ancient republics, the unsettled relations of different classes of society, the power of demagogues and orators, the intensity of factions, the want of moral and religious restraints, the want of some regular organ for expressing the public mind, the want of precedents and precise laws for the courts of justice, these and other circumstances gave to the ancient citizen a feeling as if revolutions and convulsions were inseparable from society, turned his mind with unremitting anxiety to public affairs, and made a participation of political power an important, if not an essential, means of personal safety. — Again, the ancient citizen had no home, in our sense of the word. He lived in the market, the forum, the place of general resort, and of course his attention was

Hosted by Google

very much engrossed by affairs of state. — Again, religion, which now more than all things throws a man upon himself, was in ancient times a public concern, and turned men to political life. The religion of the heart and closet was unknown. The relation of the gods to particular states, was their most prominent attribute; and to conciliate their favor to the community, the chief end of worship. Accordingly, religion consisted chiefly in public and national rites. In Rome, the highest men in the state presided at the altar, and, adding to their other titles that of Supreme Pontiff, performed the most solemn functions of the priesthood. Thus the whole strength of the religious principle was turned into political channels. The gods were thought to sustain no higher office than a political one, and of consequence this was esteemed the most glorious for men. — Once more, in ancient times political rank was vastly more efficient, whether for good or for evil, than at present, and of consequence was the object of a more insatiable ambition. It was almost the only way of access to the multitude. The public man held a sway over opinion, over his country, perhaps over foreign states, now unknown. It is the influence of the press and of good institutions to reduce the importance of the man of office. In proportion as private individuals can act on the public mind; in proportion as a people read, think, and have the means of expressing and enforcing their opinions; in proportion as laws become fixed, known, and sanctioned by the moral sense of the community; in proportion as the interests of the state, the principles of administration, and all public measures, are subjected to free and familiar discussion, government becomes a secondary influence. The power passes into

Hosted by Google

the hands of those who think, write, and spread their minds far and wide. Accordingly, literature is to become more and more the instrument of swaying men, of doing good, of achieving fame. The contrast between ancient and modern times, in the particulars now stated, is too obvious to need illustration, and our great inference is equally clear. The vast improvements, which, in the course of ages, have taken place in social order, in domestic life, in religion, in knowledge, all conspire to one result, all tend to introduce other and higher influences than political power, and to give to that form of intellectual effort, which we call literature, dominion over human affairs. Thus truth, we apprehend, is more and more felt; and from its influence, joined with our peculiar condition and free institutions, we hope for our country the happiness and glory of a pure, deep, rich, beautiful, and ennobling literature.

Hosted by Google

REMARKS

ON

ASSOCIATIONS.

---

1. Fourth Annual Report to the American Unitarian Association, read and accepted May 26, 1829, with the Addresses at the Annual Meeting.
2. The Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance, presented January 28, 1829.
3. First Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, adopted May 12, 1829.

We have affixed to this article the titles of several reports of societies, not so much for the purpose of discussing the merits of the several institutions whose labors they celebrate, as with the more general design of offering some remarks on the disposition which now prevails to form associations, and to accomplish all objects by organized masses. A difference of opinion on this point has begun to manifest itself, and murmurs against the countless societies which modestly solicit or authoritatively claim our aid, which now assail us with fair promises of the good which they purpose, and now with rhetorical encomiums on the good they have

Hosted by Google

done, begin to break forth from the judicious and well disposed, as well as from the querulous and selfish. These doubts and complaints, however, are most frequently excited by particular cases of unfair or injurious operations in societies. As yet no general principles have been established, by which the value of this mode of action may be determined, or the relative claims of different associations may be weighed. We will not promise to supply the deficiency, but we hope to furnish some help to a sounder judgment than yet prevails on the subject.

That the subject deserves attention, no man who observes the signs of the times can doubt. Its importance forces itself on the reflecting. In truth, one of the most remarkable circumstances or features of our age, is the energy with which the principle of combination, or of action by joint forces, by associated numbers, is manifesting itself. It may be said, without much exaggeration, that every thing is done now by societies. Men have learned what wonders can be accomplished in certain cases by union, and seem to think that union is competent to every thing. You can scarcely name an object for which some institution has not been formed. Would men spread one set of opinions, or crush another? They make a society. Would they improve the penal code, or relieve poor debtors? They make societies. Would they encourage agriculture, or manufactures, or science? They make societies. Would one class encourage horse-racing, and another discourage travelling on Sunday? They form societies. We have immense institutions spreading over the country, combining hosts for particular objects. We have minute ramifications of these societies, penetrating everywhere

Hosted by Google

except through the poor-house, and conveying resources from the domestic, the laborer, and even the child, to the central treasury. This principle of association is worthy the attention of the philosopher, who simply aims to understand society, and its most powerful springs. To the philanthropist and the Christian it is exceedingly interesting, for it is a mighty engine, and must act either for good or for evil, to an extent which no man can foresee or comprehend.

It is very easy, we conceive, to explain this great developement of the principle of coöperation. The main cause is, the immense facility given to intercourse by modern improvements, by increased commerce and travelling, by the post-office, by the steam-boat, and especially by the press, — by newspapers, periodicals, tracts, and other publications. Through these means, men of one mind, through a whole country, easily understand one another, and easily act together. The grand manœuvre to which Napoleon owed his victories, we mean the concentration of great numbers on a single point, is now placed within the reach of all parties and sects. It may be said, that, by facilities of intercourse, men are brought within one another's attraction, and become arranged according to their respective affinities. Those who have one great object, find one another out through a vast extent of country, join their forces, settle their mode of operation, and act together with the uniformity of a disciplined army. So extensive have coalitions become, through the facilities now described, and so various and rapid are the means of communication, that, when a few leaders have agreed on an object, an impulse may be given in a month to the whole country, whole states may be deluged with tracts and other pub-

Hosted by Google

lications, and a voice like that of many waters, be called forth from immense and widely separated multitudes. Here is a new power brought to bear on society, and it is a great moral question, how it ought to be viewed, and what duties it imposes.

That this mode of action has advantages and recommendations, is very obvious. The principal arguments in its favor may be stated in a few words. Men, it is justly said, can do jointly, what they cannot do singly. The union of minds and hands works wonders. Men grow efficient by concentrating their powers. Joint effort conquers nature, hews through mountains, rears pyramids, dikes out the ocean. Man, left to himself, living without a fellow, if he could indeed so live, would be one of the weakest of creatures. Associated with his kind, he gains dominion over the strongest animals, over the earth and the sea, and, by his growing knowledge, may be said to obtain a kind of property in the universe.

Nor is this all. Men not only accumulate power by union, but gain warmth and earnestness. The heart is kindled. An electric communication is established between those who are brought nigh, and bound to each other, in common labors. Man droops in solitude. No sound excites him like the voice of his fellow-creature. The mere sight of a human countenance, brightened with strong and generous emotion, gives new strength to act or suffer. Union not only brings to a point forces which before existed, and which were ineffectual through separation, but, by the feeling and interest which it rouses, it becomes a creative principle, calls forth new forces, and gives the mind a consciousness of powers, which would otherwise have been unknown.

Hosted by Google

We have here given the common arguments by which the disposition to association is justified and recommended. They may be summed up in a few words; namely, that our social principles and relations are the great springs of improvement, and of vigorous and efficient exertion. That there is much truth in this representation of the influences of society, we at once feel. That, without impulses and excitements from abroad, without sympathies and communication with our fellow-creatures, we should gain nothing and accomplish nothing, we mean not to deny. Still we apprehend, that on this subject there is a want of accurate views and just discrimination. We apprehend that the true use of society is not sufficiently understood; that the chief benefit which it is intended to confer, and the chief danger to which it exposes us, are seldom weighed, and that errors or crude opinions on these points deprive us of many benefits of our social connexions. These topics have an obvious bearing on the subject of this article. It is plain that the better we understand the true use, the chief benefit, and the chief peril of our social principles and relations, the better we shall be prepared to judge of associations which are offered to our patronage. On these topics, then, we propose first to give our views; and in so doing, we shall allow ourselves a considerable latitude, because, in our judgment, the influences of society at present tend strongly to excess, and especially menace that individuality of character, for which they can yield no adequate compensation.

The great principle, from which we start in this preliminary discussion, and in which all our views of the topics above proposed are involved, may be briefly expressed. It is this;— Society is chiefly important, as

Hosted by Google

it ministers to, and calls forth, intellectual and moral energy and freedom. Its action on the individual is beneficial, in proportion as it awakens in him a power to act on himself, and to control or withstand the social influences to which he is at first subjected. Society serves us, by furnishing objects, occasions, materials, excitements, through which the whole soul may be brought into vigorous exercise, may acquire a consciousness of its free and responsible nature, may become a law to itself, and may rise to the happiness and dignity of framing and improving itself without limit or end. Inward, creative energy, is the highest good which accrues to us from our social principles and connexions. The mind is enriched, not by what it passively receives from others, but by its own action on what it receives. We would especially affirm of virtue, that it does not consist in what we inherit, or what comes to us from abroad. It is of inward growth, and it grows by nothing so much as by resistance of foreign influences, by acting from our deliberate convictions, in opposition to the principles of sympathy and imitation. According to these views, our social nature and connexions are means. Inward power is the end; a power which is to triumph over, and control, the influence of society.

We are told, that we owe to society our most valuable knowledge. And true it is, that, were we cast from birth into solitude, we should grow up in brutal ignorance. But it is also true, that the knowledge which we receive is of little value, any farther than it is food and excitement to intellectual action. Its worth is to be measured by the energy with which it is sought and employed. Knowledge is noble, in proportion as it is prolific; in proportion as it quickens the mind to the

Hosted by Google

acquisition of higher truth. Let it be rested in passively, and it profits us nothing. Let the judgment of others be our trust, so that we cease to judge for ourselves, and the intellect is degraded into a worthless machine. The dignity of the mind is to be estimated by the energy of its efforts for its own enlargement. It becomes heroic, when it reverences itself and asserts its freedom in a cowardly and servile age; when it withstands society through a calm, but invincible love of truth, and a consciousness of the dignity and progressiveness of its powers.

The indispensable necessity of instruction from our fellow-creatures, we in no degree question. But perhaps few are aware how imperfect are the conceptions received from the best instructor, and how much must be done by our own solitary thinking, to give them consistency and vividness. It may be doubted whether a fellow-creature can ever impart to us apprehensions of a complex subject, which are altogether just. Be the teacher ever so unerring, his language can hardly communicate his mind with entire precision; for few words awaken exactly the same thoughts in different men. The views which we receive from the most gifted beings, are at best an approximation to truth. We have spoken of unerring teachers; but where are these to be found? Our daily intercourse is with fallible beings, most of whom are undisciplined in intellect, the slaves of prejudice, and unconscious of their own spiritual energies. The essential condition of intellectual progress in such a world, is the resistance of social influences, or of impressions from our fellow-beings.

What we have said of intellectual, is still more true of moral progress. No human being exists, whose char-

Hosted by Google

acter can be proposed as a faultless model. But, could a perfect individual be found, we should only injure ourselves by indiscriminate, servile imitation; for much which is good in another, is good in him alone, belongs to his peculiar constitution, has been the growth of his peculiar experience, is harmonious and beautiful only in combination with his other attributes, and would be unnatural, awkward, and forced in a servile imitator. The very strength of emotion, which in one man is virtue, in another would be defect; for virtue depends on the balance which exists between the various principles of the soul; and that intenseness of feeling, which, when joined with force of thought and purpose, is healthful and invigorating, would prove a disease, or might approach insanity, in a weak and sensitive mind. No man should part with his individuality, and aim to become another. No process is so fatal as that which would cast all men into one mould. Every human being is intended to have a character of his own, to be what no other is, to do what no other can do. Our common nature is to be unfolded in unbounded diversities. It is rich enough for infinite manifestations. It is to wear innumerable forms of beauty and glory. Every human being has a work to carry on within, duties to perform abroad, influences to exert, which are peculiarly his, and which no conscience but his own can teach. Let him not, then, enslave his conscience to others, but act with the freedom, strength, and dignity of one, whose highest law is in his own breast.

We know that it may be replied to us, that Providence, by placing us at birth in entire subjection to social influences, has marked out society as the great instrument of determining the human mind. The child, it

Hosted by Google

is said, is plainly designed to receive passively and with unresisting simplicity, a host of impressions, thoughts, and feelings, from those around him. This we know. But we know, too, that childhood is not to endure for ever. We know that the impressions, pleasures, pains, which throng and possess the infant mind, are intended to awaken in it an energy, by which it is to subject them to itself; by which it is to separate from the crude mass what is true and pure; by which it is to act upon, and modify, and throw into new combinations, the materials forced upon it originally by sensation and society. It is only by putting forth this inward and self-forming power, that we emerge from childhood. He who continues to be passively moulded, prolongs his infancy to the tomb. There is deep wisdom in the declaration of Jesus, that to be his disciple, we must "hate father and mother"; or, in other words, that we must surrender the prejudices of education to the new lights which God gives us; that the love of truth must triumph over the influences of our best and earliest friends; that, forsaking the maxims of society, we must frame ourselves according to the standard of moral perfection set before us in the life, spirit, and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to observe how the Creator, who has subjected the child at first to social influences, has, even at that age, provided for its growing freedom, by inspiring it with an overflowing animation, an inexpressible joy, an impatience of limits, a thirst for novelty, a delight in adventure, an ardent fancy, all suited to balance the authority of the old, and gradually mingling with the credulity of infancy that questioning, doubting spirit, on which intellectual progress chiefly depends.

The common opinion is, that our danger from society

Hosted by Google

arises wholly from its bad members, and that we cannot easily be too much influenced by the good. But, to our apprehension, there is a peril in the influence both of good and bad. What many of us have chiefly to dread from society, is, not that we shall acquire a positive character of vice, but that it will impose on us a negative character, that we shall live and die passive beings, that the creative and self-forming energy of the soul will not be called forth in the work of our improvement. Our danger is, that we shall substitute the consciences of others for our own, that we shall paralyze our faculties through dependence on foreign guides, that we shall be moulded from abroad instead of determining ourselves. The pressure of society upon us is constant, and almost immeasurable; now open and direct in the form of authority and menace, now subtile and silent in the guise of blandishment and promise. What mighty power is lodged in a frown or a smile, in the voice of praise and flattery, in scorn or neglect, in public opinion, in domestic habits and prejudices, in the state and spirit of the community to which we belong! Nothing escapes the cognizance of society. Its legislation extends even to our dress, movements, features; and the individual bears the traces, even in countenance, air, and voice, of the social influences amidst which he has been plunged. We are in great peril of growing up slaves to this exacting, arbitrary sovereign; of forgetting, or never learning, our true responsibility; of living in unconsciousness of that divine power with which we are invested over ourselves, and in which all the dignity of our nature is concentred; of overlooking the sacredness of our minds, and laying them open to impressions from any and all who surround us. Resistance of this

Hosted by Google

foreign pressure is our only safeguard, and is essential to virtue. All virtue lies in individual action, in inward energy, in self-determination. There is no moral worth in being swept away by a crowd, even towards the best objects. We must act from an inward spring. The good, as well as the bad, may injure us, if, through that intolerance which is a common infirmity of the good, they impose on us authoritatively their own convictions, and obstruct our own intellectual and moral activity. A state of society, in which correct habits prevail, may produce in many, a mechanical regularity and religion, which is any thing but virtue. Nothing morally great or good springs from mere sympathy and imitation. These principles will only forge chains for us, and perpetuate our infancy, unless more and more controlled and subdued by that inward lawgiver and judge, whose authority is from God, and whose sway over our whole nature, alone secures its free, glorious, and everlasting expansion.

The truth is, and we need to feel it most deeply, that our connexion with society, as it is our greatest aid, so it is our greatest peril. We are in constant danger of being spoiled of our moral judgment, and of our power over ourselves; and, in losing these, we lose the chief prerogatives of spiritual beings. We sink, as far as mind can sink, into the world of matter, the chief distinction of which is, that it wants self-motion, or moves only from foreign impulse. The propensity in our fellow-creatures, which we have most to dread, is that, which, though most severely condemned by Jesus, is yet the most frequent infirmity of his followers; we mean, the propensity to rule, to tyrannize, to war with the freedom of their equals, to make themselves stand-

Hosted by Google

ards for other minds, to be lawgivers, instead of brethren and friends, to their race. Our great and most difficult duty, as social beings, is, to derive constant aid from society without taking its yoke; to open our minds to the thoughts, reasonings, and persuasions of others, and yet to hold fast the sacred right of private judgment; to receive impulses from our fellow-beings, and yet to act from our own souls; to sympathize with others, and yet to determine our own feelings; to act with others, and yet to follow our own consciences; to unite social deference and self-dominion; to join moral self-subsistence with social dependence; to respect others without losing self-respect; to love our friends, and to reverence our superiors, whilst our supreme homage is given to that moral perfection which no friend and no superior has realized, and which, if faithfully pursued, will often demand separation from all around us. Such is our great work as social beings, and, to perform it, we should look habitually to Jesus Christ, who was distinguished by nothing more than by moral independence, than by resisting and overcoming the world.

The reverence for our own moral nature, on which we have now insisted, needs earnest and perpetual inculcation. This virtue finds few aids from abroad. All religions and governments have more or less warred with it. Even that religion, which came from God to raise man to a moral empire over himself, has been seized on by the selfish and intolerant principles of human nature, and all its sanctions have been brought to bear against that free, independent action of thought and conscience, which it was chiefly intended to promote. In truth, men need to be instructed in nothing more

Hosted by Google

than in what they owe to their own spiritual faculties. The sacredness of the moral principle in every human breast; its divine right of dominion; the jealousy with which it ought to be protected against our own passions, and the usurpations of society; the watchful care with which it should be unfolded, refined, and fortified, by communion with ourselves, with great and good minds, with that brightest manifestation of God, Jesus Christ, and with God himself; the awe with which its deliberate dictates should be heard; the energy which it may and should put forth in opposition to pleasure and pain, to human frowns or smiles; the sublime tranquillity to which it may ascend; the conscious union with God which it may attain, and through which it seems to partake of his omnipotence; these prerogatives of the moral nature, of that element and spark of Divinity in the soul, are almost forgotten in the condition of servitude to which the multitude are reduced by the joint tyranny of the passions and of society.

It is interesting and encouraging to observe, that the enslaving power of society over the mind is decreasing, through what would seem at first to threaten its enlargement; we mean, through the extension of social intercourse. This is a distinction of our age, and one of its chief means of improvement. Men are widening their bounds, exchanging thoughts and feelings with fellow-beings far and wide, with inhabitants of other countries, with subjects of other governments, with professors of other modes of faith. Distant nations are brought near, and are acting on one another with a new power; and the result is, that these differing and often hostile influences balance or neutralize one another, and almost compel the intellect to act, to compare, to judge, to

Hosted by Google

frame itself. This we deem an immense benefit of the multiplication of books at the present day. The best books contain errors, and deserve a very limited trust. But, wherever men of thought and genius publish freely, they will perpetually send forth new views, to keep alive the intellectual action of the world; will give a frequent shock to received opinions; will lead men to contemplate great subjects from new positions, and, by thus awakening individual and independent energy, will work higher good than by the knowledge which they spread. The same effect is to be anticipated from the study of different languages, which occupies more and more space in our systems of education; and we believe this to be the happiest effect. A great man used to say, that, in learning a new language, he had gained a new soul, so fresh and original were the views which it opened to him. A new language, considered in itself, or without reference to the writings which it contains, seems to us a valuable possession, on account of the new combinations of thought which its vocabulary presents; and when regarded as the key to the minds of a people, whose institutions, education, climate, temperament, religion, and history differ from our own, and in whom, of consequence, our common nature is taking a new form, it is, to one who has power to understand its use, an invaluable acquisition. In truth, we cannot express too strongly the importance we attach to an enlarged intercourse with other minds, considered as the means of freeing and quickening our own. This is the chief good of extensive institutions for education. They place us under diversified social influences; connect us with the dead as well as with the living; accumulate for us the thoughts of all ages and nations; take us out of the

Hosted by Google

narrow circle of a neighbourhood, or church, or community; make us fellow-citizens with the friends of truth under the whole heaven, and, through these various and often hostile influences, aid and encourage us to that independent moral judgment, and intellectual discrimination, by which our views are more and more purified and enlarged.

We regret that religion has not done more to promote this enlarged intercourse of minds, the great means, as we have seen, of reconciling social aids with personal independence. As yet, religion has generally assumed a sectarian form, and its disciples, making narrowness a matter of conscience, have too often shunned connexion with men of different views as a pestilence, and yielded their minds to the exclusive influences of the leaders and teachers of their separate factions. Indeed, we fear that in no department of life has the social principle been perverted more into an instrument of intellectual thraldom, than in religion. We could multiply proofs without end, but will content ourselves with a single illustration drawn from what are called "revivals of religion." We have many objections to these as commonly conducted; but nothing offends us more, than their direct and striking tendency to overwhelm the mind with foreign influences, and to strip it of all self-direction. In these feverish seasons, religion, or what bears the name, is spread, as by contagion, and to escape it is almost as difficult as to avoid a raging epidemic. Whoever knows any thing of human nature, knows the effect of excitement in a crowd. When systematically prolonged and urged onward, it subverts deliberation and self-control. The individual is lost in the mass, and borne away as in a whirlwind. The prevalent emotion,

Hosted by Google

be it love or hatred, terror or enthusiasm, masters every mind, which is not fortified by a rare energy, or secured by a rare insensibility. In revivals, a multitude are subjected at once to strong emotions, which are swelled and perpetuated by the most skilful management. The individual is never suffered to escape the grasp of the leading or subordinate agents in the work.* A machinery of social influences, of "inquiry meetings," of "anxious meetings," of conferences, of prayer meetings, of perpetual private or public impulses, is brought to bear on the diseased subject, until, exhausted in body and mind, he becomes the passive, powerless recipient of whatever form or impressions it may be thought fit to give him. Happily for mankind, our nature loses its sensibility to perpetual stimulants, and of consequence a revival is succeeded by what is called "a dull, dead, stupid season." This dull time is a merciful repose granted by Providence to the overwrought and oppressed mind, and gives some chance for calm, deliberate, individual thought and action. Thus the kindness of nature is perpetually counterworking the excesses of men, and a religion, which begins in partial insanity, is often seen to attain by degrees to the calmness and dignity of reason.

In the preceding remarks we have stated, at greater length than we intended, our views of the true and highest benefits of society. These seem to us great,

* We recollect seeing the following direction gravely given for managing revivals, in the book of a minister experienced in this work;—"Be careful never to kindle more fires than you can tend." In other words, Do not awaken and alarm more persons than you can place under constant inspection, and beset with perpetual excitements. What a strange rule for persons who profess to believe that these "fires" are "kindled" supernaturally by the Holy Spirit!

Hosted by Google

unspeakably great. At the same time, like all other goods, they are accompanied with serious perils. Society too often oppresses the energy which it was meant to quicken and exalt.—We now pass to our principal subject; to the associations for public purposes, whether benevolent, moral, or religious, which are so multiplied in the present age. And here we must confine ourselves to two remarks; the first intended to assign to such associations their proper place or rank, and the second, to suggest a principle, by which useful societies may be distinguished from such as are pernicious, and by which we may be aided in distributing among them our favor and patronage.

Our first remark is, that we should beware of confounding together, as of equal importance, those associations which are formed by our Creator, which spring from our very constitution, and are inseparable from our being, and those of which we are now treating, which man invents for particular times and exigencies. Let us never place our weak, short-sighted contrivances on a level with the arrangements of God. We have acknowledged the infinite importance of society to the developement of human powers and affections. But when we speak thus of society, we mean chiefly the relations in which God has placed us; we mean the connexions of family, of neighbourhood, of country, and the great bond of humanity, uniting us with our whole kind, and not Missionary societies, Peace societies, or Charitable societies, which men have contrived. These last have their uses, and some do great good; but they are no more to be compared with the societies in which nature places us, than the torches which we kindle on earth in the darkness of night, are to be paralleled with

Hosted by Google

the all-pervading and all-glorifying light of the sun. We make these remarks, because nothing is more common than for men to forget the value of what is familiar, natural, and universal, and to ascribe undue importance to what is extraordinary, forced, and rare, and therefore striking. Artificial associations have their use, but are not to be named with those of nature; and to these last, therefore, we are to give our chief regard.

We can easily illustrate, by examples, the inferiority of human associations. In Boston, there are two Asylums for children, which deserve, we think, a high place among useful institutions. Not a little time is spent upon them. Hundreds conspire to carry them on, and we have anniversaries to collect crowds for their support. And what is the amount of good accomplished? Between one and two hundred children are provided for, a number worthy of all the care bestowed on these charities. But compare this number with all the children of this city, with the thousands who throng our streets and our schools. And how are these fed, clothed, educated? We hear of no subscriptions, no anniversaries for their benefit; yet how they flourish compared with the subjects of Asylums! These are provided for by that unostentatious and unpraised society, which God has instituted, — a family. That shelter, home, which nature rears, protects them, and it is an establishment worth infinitely more than all the institutions, great or small, which man has devised. In truth, just as far as this is improved, as its duties are performed, and its blessings prized, all artificial institutions are superseded. Here then is the sphere for the agency of the wise and good Improve the family, strengthen and purify the relations of domestic life, and more is done for the hap-

Hosted by Google

piness and progress of the race than by the most splendid charities. — Let us take another example, the Hospital in the same metropolis; a noble institution, worthy of high praise. But where is it that the sick of our city are healed? Must you look for them in the Hospital? You may find there, perhaps, and should rejoice to find there, fifty or sixty beds for the poor. The thousands who sicken and die among us are to be found in their homes, watched over by the nursing care of mothers and sisters, surrounded by that tenderness which grows up only at home. — Let us take another example, Missionary societies. This whole country is thrown into excitement to support missions. The rich are taxed, and the poor burdened. We do not say that they are burdened without object; for Christianity is so infinite a blessing, that we consent to any honest methods of sending it abroad. But what is the amount of good effected? A few missionaries, we know not the precise number, are supported, of whom most have hitherto brought little to pass. Who can compare associations for this object, with churches, or those congregations of neighbours for regular worship, which Christianity has instituted, and to which nature has always prompted the professors of the same faith? Through these, incalculable aid is given to the support and diffusion of Christianity; and yet, through the propensity of human nature to exaggerate what is forced and artificial, one missionary at a distance is thought of more importance than a hundred ministers near, and the sending of him abroad is extolled as an incomparably greater exploit of piety, than the support of our own places of worship. We mean not to discourage Missionary societies; but the truth is, that Christianity is to be diffused incom-

Hosted by Google

parably more by caring for and promoting it in our natural relations, in our homes, in our common circles and churches, than by institutions endowed with the revenues of nations for sending it to distant lands. The great obstruction to Christianity among foreign nations is, its inoperativeness among the nations which profess it. We offer others a religion, which, in their apprehension, has done the givers no great good. The true course is, to rely less on our machinery of Cent societies, and National societies, and to rely more on the connexions and arrangements of nature or of God.

We beg not to be misunderstood. We would on no account discourage the Asylum, the Hospital, the Missionary society. All receive our cheerful support. We only mean to say, that our great sources of improvement and happiness are our natural relations and associations, and that to understand these better, and to attach ourselves more faithfully to their duties, are the great social means of carrying forward the world. A striking confirmation of these remarks may be found in the Romish Church. The probability is, that, under the Catholic religion in the dark ages, there were larger contributions to the relief of the distressed, in proportion to the wealth of communities, than at present, and contributions by associations which regarded almsgiving as one of their main duties; we mean the monasteries. But the monks, who quitted the relations of nature, the society which God had instituted, in order to form new and artificial bonds, more favorable, as they thought, to doing good, made a sad mistake. Their own characters were injured, and the very charities doled out from convents, increased the beggary which they hoped to relieve. So sacred is nature, that it can-

Hosted by Google

not be trampled on with impunity. We fear that something similar to the error just noticed among Catholics, is spreading among Protestants; the error of exalting societies of human device above our natural relations. We have been told that cases occur among us, and are not rare, in which domestic claims on kindness are set aside for the sake of making contributions to our great societies, and especially to foreign missions. So possessed are the minds of multitudes with the supreme importance of this object, that there seems to them a piety in withholding what would otherwise have been thought due to a poor relative, that it may be sent across oceans to Pagan lands. We have heard that delicate kindnesses, which once flowed from the more prosperous to the less prosperous members of a large family, and which bound society together by that love which is worth all bonds, are diminished since the late excitement in favor of the heathen. And this we do not wonder at. In truth, we rather wonder that any thing is done for the temporal comfort of friends, where the doctrine, on which modern missions chiefly rest, is believed. We refer to the doctrine, that the whole heathen world are on the brink of a bottomless and endless hell; that thousands every day, and millions every year, are sinking into this abyss of torture and woe; and that nothing can save them but sending them our religion. We see not how they, who so believe, can give their families or friends a single comfort, much less an ornament of life. They must be strongly tempted, one would think, to stint themselves and their dependents to necessaries, and to cast their whole remaining substance into the treasury of missionary societies.

We repeat it, let us not be misunderstood. Mission

Hosted by Google

ary societies, established on just principles, do honor to a Christian community. We regard them with any feeling but that of hostility. The readers of this work cannot have forgotten the earnestness, with which we recommended the support of a mission in India, at a time when we thought that peculiar circumstances invited exertion in that quarter. We only oppose the preference of these institutions to the natural associations and connexions of life. An individual who thinks that he is doing a more religious act in contributing to a missionary society, than in doing a needful act of kindness to a relative, friend, or neighbour, is leaving a society of God's institution, for one of man's making. He shows a perverted judgment in regard to the duties of his religion and in regard to the best means of spreading it. All that has been done, or ever will or can be done, by associations for diffusing Christianity, is a mere drop of the bucket, compared with what is done silently, and secretly, by the common daily duties of Christians in their families, neighbourhoods, and business. The surest way of spreading Christianity is, to improve Christian communities; and accordingly, he who frees this religion from corruption, and makes it a more powerful instrument of virtue where it is already professed, is the most effectual contributor to the great work of its diffusion through the world.

We now proceed to our second remark, in which we proposed to suggest a principle, by which the claims of different associations may be estimated. It is this;—The value of associations is to be measured by the energy, the freedom, the activity, the moral power, which they encourage and diffuse. In truth, the great object of all benevolence is, to give power, activity, and free-

Hosted by Google

dom to others. We cannot, in the strict sense of the word, *make* any being happy. We can give others the *means* of happiness, together with motives to the faithful use of them ; but on this faithfulness, on the free and full exercise of their own powers, their happiness depends. There is thus a fixed, impassable limit to human benevolence. It can only make men happy through themselves, through their own freedom, and energy. We go further. We believe that God has set the same limit to his own benevolence. He makes no being happy, in any other sense than in that of giving him means, powers, motives, and a field for exertion. We have here, we think, the great consideration to guide us in judging of associations. Those are good which communicate power, moral and intellectual action, and the capacity of useful efforts to the persons who form them, or to the persons on whom they act. On the other hand, associations which in any degree impair or repress the free and full action of men's powers, are so far hurtful. On this principle, associations for restoring to men health, strength, the use of their limbs, the use of their senses, especially of sight and hearing, are highly to be approved, for such enlarge men's powers ; whilst charitable associations, which weaken in men the motives to exertion, which offer a bounty to idleness, or make beggary as profitable as labor, are great calamities to society, and peculiarly calamitous to those whom they relieve. On the same principle, associations which are designed to awaken the human mind, to give to men of all classes a consciousness of their intellectual powers, to communicate knowledge of a useful and quickening character, to encourage men in thinking with freedom and vigor, to inspire an ardent love and pur-

Hosted by Google

suit of truth, — are most worthy of patronage; whilst such as are designed or adapted to depress the human intellect, to make it dependent and servile, to keep it where it is, to give a limited amount of knowledge, but not to give impulse and an onward motion to men's thoughts, — all such associations, however benevolent their professions, should be regarded as among the foes and obstructions to the best interests of society. On the same principle, associations aiming to purify and ennoble the character of a people, to promote true virtue, a rational piety, a disinterested charity, a wise temperance, and especially aiming to accomplish these ends by the only effectual means, that is, by calling forth men's own exertions for a higher knowledge of God and duty, and for a new and growing control of themselves, — such institutions are among the noblest; whilst no encouragement is due to such as aim to make men religious and virtuous by paralyzing their minds through terror, by fastening on them a yoke of opinions or practices, by pouring upon them influences from abroad which virtually annihilate their power over themselves, and make them instruments for others to speak through, and to wield at pleasure. We beg our readers to carry with them the principle now laid down in judging of associations; to inquire, how far they are fitted to call forth energy, active talent, religious inquiry, a free and manly virtue. We insist on these remarks, because not a few associations seem to us exceedingly exceptionable, on account of their tendency to fetter men, to repress energy, to injure the free action of individuals and society, and because this tendency lurks, and is to be guarded against, even in good institutions On this point we cannot but enlarge; for we deem it of the highest importance.

Hosted by Google

Associations often injure free action by a very plain and obvious operation. They accumulate power in a few hands, and this takes place just in proportion to the surface over which they spread. In a large institution, a few men rule, a few do every thing; and, if the institution happens to be directed to objects about which conflict and controversy exist, a few are able to excite in the mass strong and bitter passions, and by these to obtain an immense ascendency. Through such an association, widely spread, yet closely connected by party feeling, a few leaders can send their voices and spirit far and wide, and, where great funds are accumulated, can league a host of instruments, and by menace and appeals to interest can silence opposition. Accordingly, we fear that in this country, an influence is growing up, through widely spread societies, altogether at war with the spirit of our institutions, and which, unless jealously watched, will gradually but surely encroach on freedom of thought, of speech, and of the press. It is very striking to observe, how, by such combinations, the very means of encouraging a free action of men's minds may be turned against it. We all esteem the press as the safeguard of our liberties, as the power which is to quicken intellect by giving to all minds an opportunity to act on all. Now, by means of Tract societies, spread over a whole community, and acting under a central body, a few individuals, perhaps not more than twenty, may determine the chief reading for a great part of the children of the community, and for a majority of the adults, and may deluge our country with worthless sectarian writings, fitted only to pervert its taste, degrade its intellect, and madden it with intolerance. Let associations devoted to any objects which

Hosted by Google

excite the passions, be everywhere spread and leagued together for mutual support, and nothing is easier than to establish a control over newspapers. We are persuaded, that, by an artful multiplication of societies, devoted apparently to different objects, but all swayed by the same leaders, and all intended to bear against a hated party, as cruel a persecution may be carried on in a free country as in a despotism. Public opinion may be so combined, and inflamed, and brought to bear on odious individuals or opinions, that it will be as perilous to think and speak with manly freedom, as if an inquisition were open before us. It is now discovered, that the way to rule in this country is by an array of numbers, which a prudent man will not like to face. Of consequence, all associations aiming or tending to establish sway by numbers, ought to be opposed. They create tyrants as effectually as standing armies. Let them be withstood from the beginning. No matter whether the opinions which they intend to put down be true or false. Let no opinion be put down by such means. Let no error be suppressed by an instrument, which will be equally powerful against truth, and which must subvert that freedom of thought on which all truth depends. Let the best end fail if it cannot be accomplished by right and just means. For example, we would have criminals punished, but punished in the proper way, and by a proper authority. It were better that they should escape, than be imprisoned or executed by any man who may think fit to assume the office ; for sure we are, that, by this summary justice, the innocent would soon suffer more than the guilty ; and, on the same principle, we cannot consent that what we deem error should be crushed by the joint cries and denunciations of vast so-

Hosted by Google

cieties directed by the tyranny of a few; for truth has more to dread from such weapons than falsehood, and we know no truth against which they may not be successfully turned. In this country, few things are more to be dreaded, than organizations or institutions by which public opinion may be brought to bear tyrannically against individuals or sects. From the nature of things, public opinion is often unjust; but, when it is not embodied and fixed by pledged societies, it easily relents, it may receive new impulses, it is open to influences from the injured. On the contrary, when shackled and stimulated by vast associations, it is in danger of becoming a steady, unrelenting tyrant, brow-beating the timid, proscribing the resolute, silencing free speech, and virtually denying the dearest religious and civil rights. We say not that all great associations *must* be thus abused. We know that some are useful. We know, too, that there are cases, in which it is important that public opinion should be condensed, or act in a mass. We feel, however, that the danger of great associations is increased by the very fact, that they are sometimes useful. They are perilous instruments. They ought to be suspected. They are a kind of irregular government created within our constitutional government. Let them be watched closely. As soon as we find them resolved or disposed to bear down a respectable man or set of men, or to force on the community measures about which wise and good men differ, let us feel that a dangerous engine is at work among us, and oppose to it our steady and stern disapprobation.

We have spoken of the tendency of great institutions to accumulate power in a few hands. These few they make more active; but they tend to produce depend-

Hosted by Google

ence, and to destroy self-originated action in the vast multitudes who compose them, and this is a serious injury. Few comprehend the extent of this evil. Individual action is the highest good. What we want is, that men should do right more and more from their own minds, and less and less from imitation, from a foreign impulse, from sympathy with a crowd. This is the kind of action which we recommend. Would you do good according to the Gospel? Do it secretly, silently; so silently, that the left hand will not know what the right hand doeth. This precept does not favor the clamorous and far-published efforts of a leagued multitude. We mean not to sever men from others in well-doing, for we have said, there are many good objects which can only be accomplished by numbers. But, generally speaking, we can do most good by individual action, and our own virtue is incomparably more improved by it. It is vastly better, for example, that we should give our own money with our own hands, from our own judgment, and through personal interest in the distresses of others, than that we should send it by a substitute. Second-hand charity is not as good to the giver or receiver as immediate. There are, indeed, urgent cases where we cannot act immediately, or cannot alone do the good required. There let us join with others; but where we can do good secretly, and separately, or only with some dear friend, we shall almost certainly put forth in this way more of intellect and heart, more of sympathy and strenuous purpose, and shall awaken more of virtuous sensibility in those whom we relieve, than if we were to be parts of a multitude in accomplishing the same end. Individual action is the great point to be secured. That man alone understands the

Hosted by Google

true use of society, who learns from it to act more and more from his own deliberate conviction, to think more for himself, to be less swayed by numbers, to rely more on his own powers. One good action, springing from our own minds, performed from a principle within, performed without the excitement of an urging and approving voice from abroad, is worth more than hundreds which grow from mechanical imitation, or from the heat and impulse which numbers give us. In truth, all great actions are solitary ones. All the great works of genius come from deep, lonely thought. The writings which have quickened, electrified, regenerated the human mind, did not spring from associations. That is most valuable which is individual; which is marked by what is peculiar and characteristic in him who accomplishes it. In truth, associations are chiefly useful by giving means and opportunities to gifted individuals to act out their own minds. A Missionary society achieves little good, except when it can send forth an individual who wants no teaching or training from the society, but who carries his commission and chief power in his own soul. We urge this, for we feel that we are all in danger of sacrificing our individuality and independence to our social connexions. We dread new social trammels. They are too numerous already. From these views we learn, that there is cause to fear and to withstand great associations, as far as they interfere with, or restrain, individual action, personal independence, private judgment, free, self-originated effort. We do fear, from not a few associations which exist, that power is to be accumulated in the hands of a few, and a servile, tame, dependent spirit, to be generated in the many. Such is the danger of our times, and we are bound as Christians and freemen to withstand it.

Hosted by Google

We have now laid down the general principles, which, as we think, are to be applied to associations for public objects. Another part of our work remains. We propose to offer some remarks on a few societies, which at this time demand our patronage, or excite particular attention. In doing this, we shall speak with our customary freedom; but we beg that we may not be understood as censuring the motives of those whose plans and modes of operation we condemn.

The associations for suppressing Intemperance form an interesting feature of our times. Their object is of undoubted utility, and unites the hearts of all good men. They aim to suppress an undoubted and gross vice, to free its victims from the worst bondage, to raise them from brutal degradation to the liberty and happiness of men. There is one strong presumption in favor of the means which they have used. We have never heard of their awakening enmity and counteraction. In one particular, some of them may have erred. We refer to the compact formed by their members for abstaining from wine. When we consider, that wine is universally acknowledged to be an innocent, and often salutary beverage, that Jesus sanctioned its use by miraculously increasing it at the marriage feast, that the Scriptures teach us to thank God for it as a good gift, intended to "gladden the heart of man," and when to these considerations we add, that wine countries are distinguished for temperance, we are obliged to regard this pledge as injudicious; and we regret it, because it may bring distrust and contempt on an excellent institution, and because its abandonment, for it cannot long continue, may be construed by some as a warrant for returning to inebriating liquors. In one view, the success of the efforts

Hosted by Google

against intemperance affords us peculiar satisfaction. It demonstrates a truth, little felt, but infinitely precious; namely, the recoverableness of human nature from the lowest depths of vice. It teaches us never to despair of a human being. It teaches us, that there is always something to work on, a germ to be unfolded, a spark which may be cherished, in the human soul. Intemperance is the most hopeless state into which a man can fall; and yet, instances of recovery from this vice have rewarded the recent labors of the philanthropist. Let philanthropy then rejoice in the belief, that the capacity of improvement is never lost, and let it convert this conviction into new and more strenuous efforts for the recovery of the most depraved.

We proced now to Bible societies. These need no advocates. Their object is so simple, unexceptionable, beneficent, that all Protestants, at least, concur in their support. By spreading the Bible without note or comment, they especially assert the right of private judgment, and are thus free from the great reproach of trenching on Christian freedom. Perhaps they have not always been conducted with sufficient prudence. We have particularly feared, that they might be open to the charge of indiscreet profusion. We believe it to be a good rule, that where the poor can give any thing for a Bible, no matter how little, they should be encouraged and incited to pay this part of the price. We believe, that it will be more valued, and more carefully preserved, where it has cost something. We do not think of the Bible, as the superstitious among Catholics and heathens do of relics and charms, as if its mere presence in a family were a necessary good. We wish some pledge that it will be treated with re-

Hosted by Google

spect, and we fear that this respect has been diminished by the lavishness with which it has been bestowed. One cause of the evil is, that societies, like individuals, have a spice of vanity, and love to make a fair show in their annual reports; and accordingly they are apt to feel as if a favor were conferred, when their books are taken off their hands. We think that to secure respect to the Bible is even more important than to distribute it widely. For this purpose, its exterior should be attractive. It should be printed in a fair, large type, should be well bound, and be provided with a firm case. This last provision seems to us especially important. The poor have no book-cases. Their Bibles too often lie on the same shelves with their domestic utensils: nor can it be doubted, that, when soiled, torn, dishonored by this exposure, they are regarded with less respect, than if protected with peculiar care.

We have a still more important remark to make in reference to Bible societies. In our last number, we noticed an edition of the New Testament recently published in Boston, and differing from those in common use, by a new translation of those passages of the Greek original, of which the true reading was lost or neglected when the received English version was made. This edition of the New Testament we stated to be undoubtedly more correct, more conformed to the original, than our common editions. On this point we speak strongly, because we wish to call to it the attention of Bible societies, and of all conscientious Christians. To such we say, — Here is a translation, undoubtedly more faithful to the original than that in common use. You have here in greater purity what Jesus Christ said, and what his Apostles wrote; and if so, you are bound by your

Hosted by Google

allegiance to Christ to substitute this for the common translation. We know, that uneducated Christians cannot settle this question. We therefore respectfully, and with solemnity, solicit for it the attention of learned men, of Christian ministers, of professors of theology of every sect and name. We ask for the calmest and most deliberate investigation, and if, as we believe, there shall be but one opinion as to the claims of the version which we have recommended; if all must acknowledge that it renders more faithfully the words of the inspired and authorized teachers of Christianity, then we see not how it can be denied the reception and diffusion which it deserves. We conceive, that, to Bible societies, this is a great question, and not to be evaded without unfaithfulness to our common Master, and without disrespect to the holy Scriptures. We fear, that there is a want of conscientiousness on this subject. We fear that the British and Foreign Bible Society has forfeited, in a measure, its claims to the gratitude and admiration of the church, by neglecting to secure the greatest possible accuracy and fidelity to the new translations which they have set forth. We hear continual expressions of reverence for the Bible; but the most unambiguous proofs of it, we mean, unwearied efforts to purify it from human additions, mutilations, and corruptions, remain to be given.

Before leaving the consideration of Bible societies, we cannot but refer to a very singular transaction in relation to the Scriptures, in which some of them are thought to be implicated. In some of our cities and villages, we are told, that the rich as well as the poor have been visited for the purpose of ascertaining whether they own the Bible. The object of this domiciliary

Hosted by Google

investigation we profess not to understand. We cannot suppose, that it was intended to lavish on the rich the funds which were contributed for spreading the Scriptures among the poor. One thing we know, that a measure more likely to irritate and to be construed into an insult, could not easily be contrived. As a sign of the times it deserves our notice. After this step, it ought not to surprise us should an Inquisition be established, to ascertain, who among us observe, and who neglect, the duties of private and family prayer. We might smile at this spirit, could we tell where it would stop. But it is essentially prying, restless, and encroaching, and its first movements ought to be withstood.

We now proceed to another class of associations; those which are designed to promote the observance of the Sabbath. The motives which gave birth to these, we respect. But we doubt the rectitude and usefulness of the object, and we fear, that what has begun in conscientiousness may end in intolerance and oppression. We cannot say of these associations, as of those which we have just noticed, that they aim at an unquestionable good, about which all good men agree. Not a few of the wisest and best men dissent from the principle on which these societies are built, namely, that the Jewish Sabbath is binding on Christians. Not a few of the profoundest divines and most exemplary followers of Christ have believed and still believe, that the Sabbath enjoined in the fourth commandment is a part of Judaism, and not of the Gospel; that it is essentially different from the Lord's-day, and that to enforce it on Christians is to fall into that error which Paul withstood even unto death, the error of adulterating Christianity by mixtures of a preparatory and very inferior religion.

Hosted by Google

We beg to be understood. All Christians, whom we know, concur in the opinion and the desire, that the Lord's-day, or the first day of the week, should be separated to the commemoration of Christ's resurrection, to public worship, to public Christian instruction, and in general to what are called the means of religion. This we gratefully accept and honor as a Christian rite. But not a few believe, that the Lord's-day and the ancient Sabbath are not the same institution, and ought not to be confounded; that the former is of a nobler character, and more important than the latter, and that the mode of observing it is to be determined by the spirit and purposes of Christianity, and not by any preceding law. This is a question about which Christians have differed for ages. We certainly wish that it may be debated till it is settled. But we grieve to see a questionable doctrine made the foundation of large societies, and to see Christians leagued to pass the sentence of irreligion on men equally virtuous with themselves, and who perhaps better understand the mind of Christ in regard to the Sabbath.

We know that it is confidently affirmed, that God, at an earlier period than the Jewish law, enjoined the Sabbath as a perpetual, universal, irrepealable law for the whole human race. But can this position be sustained? For ourselves we cannot see a trace of it in the Scriptures, those only sure records of God's revelation to mankind. We do indeed incline to believe, what many wise men have questioned, that there are appearances of the institution of the Sabbath at the beginning of the human race. We know that these are faint and few; yet we attach importance to them, because nature and reason favor the supposition of a

Hosted by Google

time having been set apart from the first as a religious memorial. Whilst, however, we incline to this view as most probable, we see no proofs of the perpetuity of the institution in the circumstance of its early origin. On the contrary, an ordinance or rite, given in the infancy of the human race, may be presumed to be temporary, unless its unchangeableness is expressly taught, or is necessarily implied in its very nature. The positive or ritual religion, which was adapted to the earlier, can hardly suit the maturer periods of the race. Man is a progressive being, and needs a progressive religion. It is one of the most interesting and beautiful features of the Sacred Writings, and one of the strong evidences of their truth, that they reveal religion as a growing light, and manifest the Divine Legislator as adapting himself to the various and successive conditions of the world. Allowing then the Sabbath to have been given to Adam, we could no more infer its perpetuity, than we can infer the perpetuity of capital punishment, as an ordinance of God, because he said to Noah, the second parent of the human race, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Our opinion leans, as we have said, to the early institution of the Sabbath; but we repeat it, the presumptions on which our judgments rest are too uncertain to authorize confidence, much less denunciation. The greater part of the early Fathers of the Church, according to Calmet, believed that the law of the Sabbath was not given before Moses; and this, as we have observed, is the opinion of some of the most judicious and pious Christians of later times. Whilst disposed to differ from these, we feel that the subject is to be left to the calm decision of individuals. We want no

Hosted by Google

array of numbers to settle a doubtful question. One thing is plain, that, before Moses, not one precept is given in relation to the Sabbath, nor a hint of its unchangeableness to the end of the world. One thing is plain, that the question of the perpetuity of this institution is to be settled by the teachings of Jesus Christ, the great prophet, who alone is authorized to determine how far the institutions of religion which preceded him, are binding on his followers. For ourselves, we are followers of Christ, and not of Moses, or Noah, or Adam. We call ourselves Christians, and the Gospel is our only rule. Nothing in the Old Testament binds us, any further than it is recognised by, or incorporated into, the New. The great and only question, then, is, Does the New Testament, does Christianity, impose on us the ancient Sabbath?

To aid us in settling this question, we may first inquire into the nature and design of this institution; and nothing can be plainer. Words cannot make it clearer. According to the Old Testament, the seventh, or last day of the week, was to be set apart, or sanctified, as a day of rest, in commemoration of God's having rested on that day from the work of creation.* The dis-

* We beg our readers to observe, that we are now simply stating the account of the Sabbath which is given in the Old Testament. How this account is to be interpreted, is a question not involved in our present subject. We would, however, observe, that the rest here ascribed to God must be understood in a figurative sense. Properly speaking, God, who is incapable of fatigue, and whose almighty agency is unceasing, never rests. In finishing the work of creation, he did not sink into repose, or for a moment desist from the exercise of his omnipotence. A particular mode of his agency was discontinued; and, in accommodation to an uncultivated age, this discontinuance was called rest. It seems to us, that the Sabbath bears one mark of a temporary institution, in the fact of its being founded on a representation of God, which is true only in a figurative or popular sense, and which gives something like a shock to a mind,

Hosted by Google

tinguishing feature of the institution, is rest. The word Sabbath means rest. The event to be commemorated was rest. The reason for selecting the seventh, was, that this had been to the Creator a day of rest. The chief method prescribed for sanctifying the day was rest. The distinctive character of the institution could not have been more clearly expressed. Whoever reads the fourth commandment, will see, that no mode of setting apart the day to God is there prescribed, except in imitation of his rest. How far this constituted the sanctification of the Sabbath, will be seen from such passages as the following; — "You shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death. For whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people." * A still more remarkable proof, that the sanctification of the Sabbath consisted in resting after the example of God, is furnished by Christ, who says, that "on the Sabbath-days the priests in the Temple *profane* the Sabbath." † So essential was rest to the hallowing of that day, that the work of offering victims, though prescribed by God himself, is said to profane it. There are indeed some expressions of Moses, indicating other methods of observing the day, for he calls it "a holy convocation"; but whether this phrase applies to other places beside the Temple, is uncertain. It is not improbable, indeed, that the people resorted to the Levites and Prophets on the Sabbath rather than other days; but we find no precept to this effect; and it is well known, that no synagogues or places of wor-

which has exalted its conceptions of the Divinity. Such an institution does not carry the impress of a perpetual and universal law.

* Exod. xxxi. 14; also Jer. xvii. 22. † Matt. xii. 5.

Hosted by Google

ship were built through Judea, until after the captivity. Rest, then, was the great distinction of the day. This constituted it a memorial, and give it its name; and we conceive, that the chief stress was laid on this circumstance, because the Sabbath was intended to answer a humane, as well as religious end; that is, to give relief to persons in servitude, and to inferior animals, a provision very much needed in an unrefined and semi-barbarous age, when slavery had no acknowledged rights, and when little mercy was shown to man or beast. In conformity to these views, we find the Jewish nation always regarding the Sabbath as a joyful day, a festival. In the time of Christ, we find him bidden to a feast on the Sabbath-day, and accepting the invitation; * and our impression is, that now, as in past times, the Jews divide the day between the synagogue and social enjoyment.

The nature and end of the Sabbath cannot be easily misunderstood. It was the seventh or last day of the week, set apart by God as a day of rest, in imitation and in commemoration of his having rested on that day from the creation. That other religious observances were with great propriety introduced into the day, and that they were multiplied with the progress of the nation, we do not doubt. But the distinctive observance, and the only one expressly enjoined on the whole people, was rest. Now we ask, Is the dedication of the seventh or last day of the week to rest, in remembrance of God's resting on that day, a part of the Christian religion? The answer seems to us plain. We affirm, in the first place, what none will contradict, that this institution is not enjoined in the New Testament, even by

* Luke xiv.

Hosted by Google

the faintest hint or implication; and in the next place, we maintain, that the Christian world, so far from finding it there, have by their practice disowned its authority.

This last position may startle some of our readers. But it is not therefore less true. We maintain, that the Christian world have in practice disowned the obligation of the Sabbath established by the fourth commandment. There is, indeed, a body of Christians called Sabbatarians, who strictly and religiously observe the fourth commandment. But they are a handful; they are lost, swallowed up in the immense majority of Christians, who have for ages ceased to observe the Sabbath prescribed from Sinai. True, Christians have their sacred day, which they call a Sabbath. But is it in truth the ancient Sabbath? We say, no; and we call attention to this point. The ancient Sabbath, as we have seen, was the last day of the week, set apart for rest, in commemoration of God's resting on that day. And is the first day of the week, a day observed in remembrance of Christ's resurrection from the dead, the same institution with this? Can broader marks between two ordinances be conceived? Is it possible that they can be confounded? Is not the ancient Sabbath renounced by the Christian world? Have we not thus the testimony of the Christian world to its having passed away? Who of us can consistently plead for it as a universal and perpetual law?

We know, that it is said, that the ancient Sabbath remains untouched; that Christianity has only removed it from the last to the first day of the week, and that this is a slight, unessential change, leaving the old institution whole and unbroken. To this we have several replies. In the first place, this change of days, which Christiani-

Hosted by Google

ty is supposed to make, is not unessential, but vital, and subversive of the ancient institution. The end of the ancient Sabbath was the commemoration of God's resting from his works, and, for this end, the very day of the week on which he rested was most wisely selected. Now we maintain, that to select the first day of the week, the very day on which he began his works, and to select and separate this in commemoration of another event, of Christ's resurrection, is wholly to set aside the ancient Sabbath. We cannot conceive of a more essential departure from the original ordinance. This substitution, as it is called, is a literal as well as virtual abolition. Such is our first remark. — We say, secondly, that not a word is uttered in the New Testament of the first day being substituted for the seventh. Surely so striking a change would not have been made in a universal and perpetual law of God, without some warning. We ask for some hint of this modification of the fourth commandment. We find not a syllable. — We say, thirdly, that the first Christians knew nothing of this substitution. Our evidence here is complete. The first converts to Christianity were Jews, and these converts had at first no conception of the design of Christianity to supersede the law of Moses. This law they continued to observe for years, and to observe it as rigorously as ever. When Paul visited Jerusalem, after many labors among the Gentiles, the elders said unto him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law." * Of course they all observed the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of rest, the greatest of Jewish festivals, whilst, as we all believe, they honored

* Acts xxi. 20.

Hosted by Google

also the first day, the remembrancer of Christ's resurrection. This state of things existed for years in the primitive church. The two days were observed together. Nothing more seems necessary to disprove unanswerably the common doctrine, that the Apostles enjoined the substitution of the first for the seventh day. — We will add one more argument. Paul commands the Colossian Christians to disregard the censures of those who judged or condemned them for not observing the Sabbath. "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." * This passage is very plain. It is evaded, however, by the plea, that the word "Sabbath" was used to express not only the seventh day, but other festivals or days of rest. But when we recollect, that the word is used by Paul in this place without any exception or limitation, and that it was employed at that time, most frequently and almost wholly, to express the seventh day, or weekly Sabbath, we shall see, that we have the strongest reason for supposing this institution to be intended by the Apostle. That a Christian, after reading this passage, should "judge," or condemn his brethren, for questioning or rejecting his particular notion of the Sabbath, is a striking proof of the slow progress of tolerant and liberal principles among men. We need not add, after these remarks, how unjustifiable we deem it to enforce particular modes of observing this day, by an array of associations.

Having thus stated what seem to us strong reasons against the perpetuity of the ancient Sabbath, perhaps some of our readers may wish to know our views of the Lord's-day, and, although the subject may seem foreign

* Col. ii. 16.

Hosted by Google

to the present article, we will give our opinion in a few words. We believe, that the first day of the week is to be set apart for the public worship of God, and for the promotion of the knowledge and practice of Christianity, and that it was selected for this end in honor of the resurrection of Christ. To this view we are led by the following considerations:—Wherever the Gospel was preached, its professors were formed into churches or congregations, and ministers were appointed for their instruction or edification. Wherever Christianity was planted, societies for joint religious acts and improvement were instituted, as the chief means of establishing and diffusing it. Now it is plain, that for these purposes regular times must have been prescribed; and, accordingly, we find, that it was the custom of the primitive Christians to hold their religious assemblies on the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection. This we learn from the New Testament, and from the universal testimony of the earliest ages of the church. Wherever Christianity was spread, the first day was established as the season of Christian worship and instruction. Such are the grounds on which this institution rests. We regard it as altogether a *Christian institution*,—as having its origin in the Gospel,—as peculiar to the new dispensation; and we conceive, that the proper observation of it is to be determined wholly by the spirit of Christianity. We meet in the New Testament no precise rules as to the mode of spending the Lord's-day, as to the mode of worship and teaching, as to the distribution of the time not given to public services. And this is just what might be expected; for the Gospel is not a religion of precise rules. It differs from Judaism in nothing more than in its free character. It

Hosted by Google

gives great principles, broad views, general, prolific, all-comprehensive precepts, and intrusts the application of them to the individual. It sets before us the perfection of our nature, the spirit which we should cherish, the virtues which constitute "the kingdom of heaven within us," and leaves us to determine for ourselves, in a great measure, the discipline by which these noble ends are to be secured. Let no man, then, bind what Christ has left free. The modes of worship and teaching on the Lord's-day are not prescribed, and who will say that they cannot be improved? One reason of the neglect and limited influence of this institution is, that, as now observed, it does not correspond sufficiently to the wants of our times; and we fear, that it might even fall into contempt among the cultivated, should attempts be prosecuted to carry it back to the superstitious rigor by which it was degraded in a former age.

The associations for promoting the observance of the Sabbath, propose several objects, in which, to a certain extent, we heartily concur, but which, from their nature, are not susceptible of precise definition or regulation, and which, therefore, ought to be left, where Christianity has left them, to the consciences of individuals. They undoubtedly intend to discountenance labor on Sunday. Now, generally speaking, abstinence from labor seems to us a plain duty of the day; for we see not how its ends can otherwise be accomplished to any considerable extent. We do not believe, indeed, that this abstinence was rigidly practised by the first Christians at Jerusalem, who, as we have seen, gave up the seventh day to entire rest, and whose social duties could hardly have admitted the same appropriation of the following day. Neither do we believe that the converts, who

Hosted by Google

were made among the class of slaves in heathen countries, abstained from labor on the first day of the week, for, in so doing, they would have exposed themselves to the severest punishments, even to death, and we have no intimation that this portion of believers were regularly cut off by martyrdom. We know, however, that the early Christians, in proportion as they were relieved from the restrictions of Heathenism and Judaism, made the Lord's-day a season of abstinence from labor; and the arguments for so doing are so obvious and strong, that later Christians have concurred with them with hardly a dissenting voice. On this point there is, and can be, no difference. The change of Sunday into a working day, we should condemn as earnestly as any of our brethren. At the same time, we feel, that, in this particular, a Jewish rigor is not to be imposed on Christians, and that there are exigencies justifying toil on the first day, which must be left to individual judgment. The great purposes of this festival may certainly be accomplished, without that scrupulous, anxious shunning of every kind of work, which marked a Jewish Sabbath, and which, however proper under a servile dispensation, and in an age of darkness, would be in us superstition. We do not, for example, think Christians bound to prepare on Saturday every meal for the following day, or to study through the week how to remove the necessity of every bodily exertion on the approaching Sunday. We think, too, that cases may occur, which justify severe toil on this day; and we should judge a man unfaithful to himself and his family, ungrateful to Providence, and superstitious, who should lose a crop rather than harvest it during the portion of time ordinarily set apart for Christian worship. On these points, Christiani-

Hosted by Google

ty has left us free. The individual must be his own judge, and we deprecate the attempts of societies to legislate on this indefinite subject for their fellow-Christians.

Another purpose of the associations of which we speak, is, to stop the mail on Sunday. On this point, a great difference of opinion prevails among the most conscientious men. It may be remembered, that, in a former number of this work, there was an article on the Sabbath, discouraging this attempt to interrupt the mail. We think it right to say, that among the contributors to this work, and among its best friends, a diversity of sentiment exists in regard to this difficult question. In one respect, however, we all agree; and that is, in the inexpediency of organizing, in opposition to the Sunday mail, a vast association, which may be easily perverted to political purposes, which, from its very object, will be tempted to meddle with government, and which, by setting up a concerted and joint cry, may overpower and load with reproach the most conscientious men in the community.

Another purpose of these associations is, to discourage travelling on the Lord's-day. Nothing can well be plainer, than that unnecessary travelling on this day is repugnant to its duties and design, and is to be reproved in writing, preaching, and conversation. By unnecessary travelling, we mean that which is not required by some particular exigency. When we consider, however, that in such a community as ours, distinguished by extent and variety of intercourse, exigencies must continually occur, we feel, that here is another point with which societies have no right to interfere, and which must be left to the conscience of the individual.

Hosted by Google

In such a community as ours, how many persons may be found on every Sunday, the state of whose health, the state of whose families, the state of whose affairs, may require them to travel? It may happen, that another's property confided to our care may be lost, that a good object may fail, that some dying or departing friend may go from us unseen, if on this day we will not begin or pursue a journey. How often is it difficult for the traveller to find an inn, the quiet and comforts of which make it a fit residence for Sunday? An association against travelling on Sunday seems to us a very hazardous expedient; and its members, we think, will be fortunate if they escape the guilt of censoriousness and dictation, on a subject which Providence has plainly exempted from human legislation. We know that it will be said, that the license, which we give by these remarks, will be abused; and of this we have no doubt. We know no truth, no privilege, no power, no blessing, no right, which is not abused. But is liberty to be denied to men, because they often turn it into licentiousness? We have read of certain sects, which have denounced indiscriminately all sports and relaxations, because these, if allowed, will be carried to excess; and of others, which have prescribed by laws the plainest, coarsest dress, because ornament, if in any measure tolerated, would certainly grow up into extravagance and vanity. And is this degrading legislation never to end? Are men never to be trusted to themselves? Is it God's method to hem them in with precise prescriptions? Does Providence leave nothing to individual discretion? Does Providence withhold every privilege which may be abused? Does Christianity enjoin an exact, unvarying round of services, because

Hosted by Google

reason and conscience, if allowed to judge of duty, will often be misguided by partiality and passion? How liberal, generous, confiding, are nature, Providence, and Christianity, in their dealings with men! And when will men learn to exercise towards one another, the same liberal and confiding spirit?

We have thus considered some of the particular purposes of the association for promoting the observance of the Sabbath. We say, their "particular purposes." We apprehend there is a general one, which lurks in a portion of their members, which few perhaps have stated very distinctly to themselves, but which is not therefore the less real, and of which it is well to be forewarned. We apprehend that some, and not a small party, have a vague instinctive feeling, that the kind of Christianity which they embrace, requires for its diffusion a gloomy Sabbath, the Puritan Sabbath; and we incline to believe that they are desirous to separate the Lord's-day as much as possible from all other days, to make it a season of rigid restraint, that it may be a preparation for a system of theology, which the mind, in a natural, free, and cheerful state, can never receive. The Sabbath of the Puritans and their Calvinistic peculiarities go together. Now we wish the return of neither. The Puritans, measured by their age, have indeed many claims on respect, especially those of them who came to this country, and who, through their fortunate exile, escaped the corruption which the civil war and the possession of power engendered in the Puritan body of England. But sincere respect for the men of early times may be joined with a clear perception of their weaknesses and errors; and it becomes us to remember, that errors, which in them were innocent, because inevitable,

Hosted by Google

may deserve a harsher appellation if perpetuated in their posterity.

We have no desire, it will be seen, to create huge associations for enforcing or recommending the Lord's-day. We desire, however, that this interesting subject may engage more attention. We wish the Lord's-day to be more honored and more observed; and we believe that there is but one way for securing this good, and that is to make the day more useful, to turn it to better account, to introduce such changes into it as shall satisfy judicious men, that it is adapted to great and happy results. The Sunday which has come down to us from our fathers seems to us exceedingly defective. The clergy have naturally taken it very much into their own hands, and, we apprehend, that as yet they have not discovered all the means of making it a blessing to mankind. It may well excite surprise, how little knowledge has been communicated on the Lord's-day. We think, that the present age admits and requires a more extensive teaching than formerly; a teaching not only in sermons, but in more instructive exercises, which will promote a critical and growing acquaintance with the Scriptures; will unfold morality or duty, at once in its principles and vast details; will guide the common mind to larger views, and to a more religious use of nature and history; and will reveal to it its own godlike powers. We think, too, that this great intellectual activity may be relieved and cheered by a mixture of greater benevolent activity; by attention to public and private charities, and by domestic and social kindnesses.* It seems to us that we are waking

* Would not the business of our public charities be done more effectually on the Lord's-day than on any other, and would not such an ap-

Hosted by Google

up to understand the various uses to which Sunday may be applied. The present devotion of a considerable portion of it to the teaching of children, makes an important era in the history of the institution. The teaching of the ignorant and poor, we trust, is to follow. On this subject we cannot enlarge, but enough has been said to show in what way Sunday is to be recommended to the understandings and consciences of men.

In these remarks we have expressed our reverence for the Lord's-day. To us it is a more important day, and consecrated to nobler purposes than the ancient Sabbath. We are bound, however, to state, that we cannot acquiesce in the distinctions which are often made between this and other days, for they seem to us at once ungrounded and pernicious. We sometimes hear, for example, that the Lord's-day is set apart from our common lives to religion. What! Are not all days equally set apart to religion? Has religion more to do with Sunday than with any other portion of time? Is there any season, over which piety should not preside? So the day is sometimes distinguished as "holy". What! Is there stronger obligation to holiness on one day than another? Is it more holy to pray in the church than to pray in the closet, or than to withstand temptation in common life? The true distinction of Sunday is, that it is consecrated to certain means or direct acts of religion. But these are not holier than other duties. They are certainly not more important than their end, which is a virtuous life. There is, we fear, a superstition on this point, unworthy of the illumination of Christianity. We earnestly recommend the Lord's-day,

propriation of a part of this time accord peculiarly with the spirit of Christianity?

Hosted by Google

but we dare not esteem its duties above those of other days. We prize and recommend it as an institution through which our whole lives are to be sanctified and ennobled; and, without this fruit, vain, and worse than vain, are the most rigid observances, the most costly sacrifices, the loudest and most earnest prayers. We would on no account disparage the offices of the Lord's-day. We delight in this peaceful season, so fitted to allay the feverish heat and anxieties of active life, to cherish self-communion, and communion with God and with the world to come. It is good to meet, as brethren, in the church to pray together, to hear the word of God, to retire for a time from ordinary labors, that we may meditate on great truths more deliberately, and with more continuous attention. In these duties we see a fitness, excellence, and happiness; but still, if a comparison must be made, they seem to us less striking proofs of piety and virtue, than are found in the disinterestedness, the self-control, the love of truth, the scorn of ill-gotten wealth, the unshaken trust in God, the temperate and grateful enjoyment, the calm and courageous sufferings for duty, to which the Christian is called in daily life. It is right to adore God's goodness in the hour of prayer; but does it not seem more excellent to carry in our souls the conviction of this goodness, as our spring and pattern, and to breathe it forth in acts conformed to the beneficence of our Maker? It is good to seek strength from God in the church; but does it not seem more excellent, to use well this strength in the sore conflicts of life, and to rise through it to a magnanimous and victorious virtue? Such comparisons, however, we have no pleasure in making, and they are obviously exposed to error. The enlightened

Hosted by Google

Christian "esteemeth every day alike." To him, all days bring noble duties; bring occasions of a celestial piety and virtue; bring trials, in wrestling with which he may grow strong; bring aids and incitements, through which he may rise above himself. All days may be holy, and the holiest is that in which he yields himself, with the most single-hearted, unshrinking, uncompromising purpose, to the will of God.

We intended to add remarks on some other associations, particularly on the Peace society. But we have exceeded our limits, and must forbear. Our remarks have been free, but, we trust, will not be misunderstood. We look with interest and hope on the spirit of association, which characterizes our times. We rejoice in this, as in every manifestation of a desire for the improvement of mankind. We have done what we could to secure this powerful instrument against perversion. Through a wise and jealous care, we doubt not that it will minister to that only sure good, the intellectual and moral progress of the human race.

Hosted by Google

THE UNION.

Correspondence between John Quincy Adams, Esquire, President of the United States, and several Citizens of Massachusetts, concerning the Charge of a Design to dissolve the Union alleged to have existed in that State. Boston: 1829.

We have placed at the head of this article the title of a pamphlet, which has drawn much attention and excited much feeling. But in so doing, we have not thought of reviewing the controversy to which it relates. Our work is devoted to the inculcation and defence of great principles, and we are anxious to keep it free from irritating personalities. We are resolved to contend earnestly for what we deem truth, but we wish no contest with individuals. We are aware that cases may exist, in which justice to persecuted virtue, or to a good but suffering cause, may bind us to take part in temporary controversies. We feel, however, no such obligation in the present instance. In the Correspondence, those whom we deem injured have vindicated themselves too effectually to need other defenders. The charge of a Northern plot for dismembering the country has been fairly met and triumphantly refuted. We violate, therefore, no duty, in following our inclinations,

Hosted by Google

and in leaving this controversy to those whom it immediately concerns. — To prevent misapprehension, we will add, that in speaking of the charge which gave rise to the correspondence, as fully refuted, we mean not to accuse of wilful misrepresentation the individual by whom it was brought forward. We are not ignorant of the facility with which men deceive themselves, especially when their passions are inflamed. We mean not to deny, that Mr. Adams may imagine himself in possession of proofs which sustain his allegation; nor is it hard to explain the delusion. It is very possible, that twenty-five years ago, in a most agitated and convulsed state of the country, some among us questioned, whether the national government was likely to accomplish the good which it had promised. It is very possible, that, in that season of exasperation, some rash spirits among the Federalists gave utterance to passionate invectives, and inconsiderate menaces; and we can very easily understand, how a mind, disposed to misconstrue the words and actions of ardent partisans, might, in the midst of such excitement, become haunted with suspicions and visionary conspiracies. We think it very creditable to our country, that, in passing through the stormy season of which we have spoken, it teemed with no more panics and inventions of secret treasons; that so few plots were feigned or feared. We exceedingly regret, that Mr. Adams has made it necessary to his reputation, to fasten a reproach of this nature on a portion of his fellow-citizens. We regret, not only for public reasons, but for his own sake, that, on retiring from office, he cannot promise himself the happiness of his predecessors, the happiness of a calm and dignified retirement from public strife.

Hosted by Google

Our aim in the present article is to call the attention of our readers to a subject of great moment, which is directly brought before us by the Correspondence ; we mean, the Importance of our National Union. This topic is one of transcendent and universal interest, and therefore deserves a place in a work devoted to the inculcation of those great principles, which involve the virtue and happiness of the community. In the discussion of such a topic, we shall of necessity recur to the events and struggles of the last thirty or forty years. But we shall do so, not for the purpose of reviving half-extinguished animosities, but in the hope of pointing out our danger as a nation, and of awakening a more enlightened attachment to our common country. We trust, that we claim for ourselves no singular virtue in saying, that we look back on the conflicts and revolutions of this period as on matters of history, and that we identify ourselves with them scarcely more than with events preceding our birth. It seems to us, that a good degree of impartiality in relation to this period, instead of requiring a high moral effort, is almost forced upon us by the circumstances of our times. Our age has been marked above all others by the suddenness, variety, and stupendousness of its revolutions. The events of centuries have been crowded into a single life. The history of the civilized world, since the bursting forth of the French Revolution, reminds us of one of the irregular dramas of Shakspeare, in which the incidents of a reign are compressed into an hour. Overwhelming changes have rushed upon one another too rapidly to give us time to comprehend them, and have been so multiplied as to exhaust our capacity of admiration. In consequence of this thronging and whirl of

Hosted by Google

events, the revolutions which we have witnessed seem to be thrown back, and to belong to a previous age. Our interest in them as contemporaries is diminished to a degree which excites our own wonder, and we think that we recall them with as little selfish partiality, as we experience on looking back on the transactions of past centuries. Perhaps we are deceived; but we can assure our readers, that we should not trust ourselves to speak as frankly as we may of the past, did we not believe, that our personal interest in it differs little from what we feel in other important periods of human history.

We have said, that our present topic is the importance of the Union, and we have selected it because it cannot, we apprehend, be too deeply impressed. No lesson should be written more indelibly on the hearts of our citizens. To secure to it the strong conviction with which it ought to be received, we have thought that we might usefully insist on the chief good which the Union confers; and we are the more disposed to do this, because we are not sure that this subject is sufficiently understood, because we sometimes apprehend that the people are not aware of the most essential benefit which they derive from the confederation, but are looking to it for advantages which it cannot bestow, and are in danger of exposing it to hazard by expecting from it more than it can accomplish. Of all governments we may say, that the good which they promote is chiefly negative, and this is especially true of the federal institutions which bind these States together. Their highest function is, to avert evil. Nor let their efficiency on this account be disparaged. The highest political good, liberty, is negative. It is the removal of ob-

Hosted by Google

structions. It is security from wrong. It confers no positive happiness, but opens a field in which the individual may achieve his happiness by his own unfettered powers. The great good of the Union we may express almost in a word. It preserves us from wasting and destroying one another. It preserves relations of peace among communities, which, if broken into separate nations, would be arrayed against one another in perpetual, merciless, and ruinous war. It indeed contributes to our defence against foreign states, but still more it defends us from one another. This we apprehend to be the chief boon of the Union, and its importance we apprehend is not sufficiently felt. So highly do we estimate it, that we ask nothing of the General Government, but to hold us together, to establish among the different States relations of friendship and peace; and we are sure, that our State Governments and individual energies will work out for us a happiness, such as no other people have yet secured.

The importance of this benefit is easy to be understood, by considering the sure and tremendous miseries which would follow disunion. For ourselves, we fear, that, bloody and mournful as human history now is, a sadder page, than has yet been written, might record the sufferings of this country, should we divide ourselves into separate communities. Our impressions on this subject are so strong, that we cannot resist the desire of communicating them to others. We fear that our country, in case of disunion, would be broken into communities, which would cherish towards one another singularly fierce and implacable enmities. We do not refer to the angry and vindictive feelings which would grow out of the struggles implied in a separation. There

Hosted by Google

are other and more permanent causes of hatred and hostility.

One cause, we think, would be found in the singularly active, bold, enterprising spirit, which actuates this whole country. Perhaps, as a people, we have no stronger distinction, than a thirst for adventure and new acquisitions. A quiet, cold, phlegmatic race might be divided with comparatively little peril. But a neighbourhood of restless, daring, all-grasping communities, would contain within itself the seeds of perpetual hostility. Our feverish activity would break out in endless competitions and jealousies. In every foreign market, we should meet as rivals. The same great objects would be grasped at by all. Add to this, that the necessity of preserving some balance of power, would lead each republic to watch the others with a suspicious eye; and this balance could not be maintained, in these young and growing communities, as easily as in the old and stationary ones of Europe. Among nations, such as we should form, which would only have begun to develope their resources, and in which the spirit of liberty would favor an indefinite expansion, the political equilibrium would be perpetually disturbed. Under such influences an irritable, and almost justifiable sensitiveness to one another's progress would fester into unrelenting hatred. Our neighbour's good would become to us a curse. Among such communities there could be no love, and would be no real peace. To obstruct one another's growth would be deemed the perfection of policy. Slight collisions of interest, which must perpetually recur, would be exaggerated by jealousy and hatred into unpardonable wrongs; and unprincipled statesmen would find little difficulty in swelling imagi-

Hosted by Google

nary grievances into causes of war. When we look at the characteristic spirit of this country, stimulated as it is by our youth and capacities of improvement, we cannot conceive of more active springs of contention and hatred, than would be created at once by our disunion into separate nations.

We proceed to the second and a very important consideration. Our possession of a common language, which is now an unspeakable good, would, in case of disunion, prove as great a calamity ; for it would serve, above all things, to multiply jealousies and exasperate bad passions. In Europe, different nations, having each its own language, and comparatively small communication, can act but little on each other. Each expresses its own self-esteem and its scorn of other communities in writings, which seldom pass its own bounds, and which minister to its own vanity and prejudices without inflaming other states. But suppose this country broken up into contiguous nations, all speaking the same language, all enjoying unrestrained freedom of the press, and all giving utterance to their antipathies and recriminations in newspapers, which would fly through all on the wings of the winds. Who can set bounds to the madness which such agents of mischief would engender ? It is a fact, too well known, that feelings of animosity among us towards Great Britain have been kept alive chiefly by a few publications from the latter country, which have been read by a very small part of our population. What then are we to expect in case of our disunion, when the daily press of each nation would pour forth on the neighbouring communities unceasing torrents of calumny, satire, ridicule, and invective ? An exasperating article from the pen of a distinguished man in one

Hosted by Google

republic, would in less than a week have found its way to every house and cottage in the adjoining States. The passions of a whole people would be kindled at one moment; and who of us can conceive the intensity of hatred which would grow from this continued, maddening interchange of intemperate and unmeasured abuse?

Another source of discord, in case of our separation, is almost too obvious to be mentioned. Once divided, we should form stronger bonds of union with foreign nations than with one another. That Europe would avail itself of our broken condition to establish an influence among us; that belligerents in the Old World would strive to enlist us in their quarrels; that our eagerness for commercial favors and monopolies would lay us open to their intrigues; that at every quarrel among ourselves we should be willing to receive aid from abroad, and that distant nations would labor to increase our dependence upon themselves by inflaming and dividing us against each other; these are considerations too obvious to need exposition, and as solemn and monitory as they are clear. From disunion, we should reap, in plentiful harvests, destructive enmities at home, and degrading subserviency to the powers of Europe.

We pass to another topic, particularly worthy of notice. In case of separation, party spirit, the worst foe of free states, would rage more furiously in each of the new and narrower communities, than now it does in our extensive Union; and this spirit would not only spread deadly hatred through each republic, but would perpetually embroil it with its neighbours. We complain of party rage even now; but it is mild and innocent compared with what we should experience, were our Union dissolved. Party spirit, when spread over a large coun-

Hosted by Google

try, is far less envenomed and ruinous than when shut up in small states. The histories of Greece and Rome are striking illustrations of this truth. In an extensive community, a party, depressed on one spot, finds sympathies and powerful protectors in another; and if not, it finds more generous enemies at a distance, who mitigate the violence of its nearer foes. The fury attending elections is exceedingly allayed, by the knowledge that the issue does not depend on one or another city or district, and that failure in one place is not the loss of the cause. It may be added, that in a large country, party spirit is necessarily modified and softened by the diversity of interests, views, and characters, which must prevail among a widely scattered people. It is also no small advantage, that the leaders of parties will generally be separated from one another by considerable distances, will move in remote spheres, instead of facing each other, and engaging perpetually in personal debate and conflict. Suppose these circumstances reversed; suppose the country broken into republics so small, as to admit a perfect unity and sympathy among the members of the same party, as to keep the leaders of opposite parties perpetually in one another's sight and hearing, as to make the fate of elections dependent on definite efforts and votes in particular places; and who can calculate the increase of personal animosity, of private rancor, of public rage? Nor would the spirit of party convulse only the separate communities. It would establish between them the most injurious relations. No passion seems to overpower patriotism and moral sentiment more effectually than this spirit. Those whom it binds, seem to throw off all other bonds. Inflamed parties are most unscrupulous as to means. Under great

Hosted by Google

excitement, they of course look round them on other communities to find means of ensuring triumph over their opponents. Of consequence, the political relations, which would subsist between the different republics that would spring up from our disunion, would be determined chiefly by party spirit; by a passion, which is most reckless of consequences, most prolific of discord, most prodigal of blood. Each republic would be broken into two factions, one in possession, and the other in pursuit of power, and both prepared to link themselves with the factions of their neighbours, and to sacrifice the peace and essential interests of the state to the gratification of ambition and revenge. Through such causes, operating in the Grecian republics, civil war added its horrors to foreign contests. We see nothing to avert from ourselves, if ever divided, the same unspeakable calamity.

In this exposition of the evils which would spring from disunion, we have spoken strongly, but, we trust, calmly. There is no need of exaggeration. It seems to us, that the imagination cannot easily exceed the truth. We do dread separation as the greatest of political evils, with the single exception of slavery. Undoubtedly a particular State may and ought to break the bond, if that bond is to be turned into a yoke of oppression. But much, very much should be endured before we expose ourselves to the calamities of separation. We particularly recommend the views which we have taken to those among us, whose interest in the Union is weakened by a vague idea, that a large community cannot be as well governed as a small. The reverse of this maxim, as we have seen, is true of a federal republic. Under despotisms, indeed, a vast ter-

Hosted by Google

ritory may increase the sufferings of the people, because the sovereign at the centre, however well disposed, cannot spread himself to the extremities, and distant provinces are almost of necessity given up to the spoliations of irresponsible governors. But, under the wise distribution of power in this country, we enjoy the watchful and minute protection of a local government, combined with the immense advantage of a widespread community. Greater means of prosperity a people cannot enjoy. Let us not be defrauded of them by selfish or malignant passions.

From the remarks now made, it will at once be understood, on what account chiefly we prize and would uphold our National Government. We prize it as our bond of union ; as that which constitutes us one people ; as preserving the different States from mutual jealousies and wars, and from separate alliances with foreign nations ; as mitigating party spirit ; in one word, as perpetuating our peace. So great, so inestimable is this good, that all other benefits and influences of the Federal Government seem to us as nothing. We would lay down this as the fundamental principle of its administration. The bearing of measures on our Union should be the chief aspect, under which they should be regarded by Congress. Taking this position, we are naturally led to some great maxims by which, as we conceive, our public affairs should be guided, and we now proceed to develope these, as well as to point out other means for securing our confederation.

In the first place, it seems to be important, that the administration of our government should be marked by the greatest possible simplicity. We hold this to be no unimportant means of perpetuating our Union. Laws

Hosted by Google

and measures should be intelligible, founded on plain principles, and such as common minds may comprehend. This indeed is a maxim to be applied to republican governments universally. The essential idea of a republic is, that the sovereignty is in the people. In choosing representatives they do not devolve the supreme power on others. By the frequency of elections, they are called to pass judgment on the representatives. It is essential to this mode of government, that, through a free press, all public measures should be brought before the tribunal of the people. Of course, a refined and subtile policy, or a complicated legislation, which cannot be understood but by laborious research and reasoning, is hostile to the genius of republican institutions. Laws should be plain and few, intended to meet obvious wants, and such as are clearly required by the great interests of the community. For ourselves, we are satisfied that all governments without exception can adopt no safer rule, than the simplicity which we have now recommended. The crying sin of all governments is, that they intermeddle injuriously with human affairs, and obstruct the processes of nature by excessive regulation. To us, society is such a complicated concern, its interests are affected by so many and such subtile causes, there are so many secret springs at work in its bosom, and such uncertainty hangs over the distant issues of human arrangements, that we are astonished and shocked at the temerity of legislators in interposing their contrivances and control, except where events and experience shed a clear light. Above all, in a country like our own, where public measures are to be judged by millions of people, scattered over a vast territory, and most of whom are engaged in laborious

Hosted by Google

occupations, we know not a plainer principle, than that the domestic aud foreign policy of government should be perspicuous and founded on obvious reasons, so that plain cases may in the main, if not always, be offered to popular decision. Measures, which demand profound thought for their justification, about which intelligent and honest men differ, and the usefulness of which cannot be made out to the common mind, are unfit for a republic. If in this way important national advantages should be sometimes lost, we ought to submit to the evil as inseparable from our institutions, and should comfort ourselves with thinking, that Providence never bestows an unmixed good, that the best form of government has its inconveniences, and that a people, possessing freedom, can afford to part with many means of immediate wealth. We have no fear, however, that a people will ever suffer by a rigid application of our rule. Legislators cannot feel too deeply the delicacy of their work, and their great ignorance of the com plicated structure and of the multiplied and secret relations of the social state ; and they ought not to hasten, nay, more, they ought to distrust, a policy, to the justice and wisdom of which the suffrage of public opinion cannot be decidedly and intelligently secured. In our republic, the aim of Congress should be to stamp its legislation with all possible simplicity, and to abstain from measures, which, by their complication, obscurity, and uncertainty, must distract the public mind, and throw it into agitation and angry controversy. Let it be their aim to cast among the people as few brands of discord as possible; and for this end, let the spirit of adventurous theory be dismissed, and the spirit of modesty, caution, and prudent simplicity preside over legis-

Hosted by Google

lation. In these remarks we have not forgotten that there are exigencies, in which government is compelled to determine its course without delay, amidst great hazards, and in a stormy, distracted state of the public mind. But these are exceptions to the ordinary course of human affairs, and to these, the principle which we have advanced is not to be applied.

We here proceed to another principle, still more important to the preservation of the Union. The General Government should correspond to its name; that is, should be general, or universal, in its spirit and operations. It should be characterized by nothing so strikingly as by impartiality, by the absence of sectional feeling, by a solicitude to distribute equally the public burdens, and to extend equal benefits to all members of the confederation. On this principle the Union chiefly depends. In a free community the strongest of all feelings is a jealousy of rights, and states cannot be long held together, if it shall be thought that the power, given for the general weal, is, through intrigue and selfish combinations, perverted to build up a portion of the confederacy at the expense of the rest. No stronger argument can be urged against a public measure, than that it has the appearance of a partial or unequal bearing on the country, or seems to indicate a disposition in the majority to sacrifice the common good to factious or sectional views. To guard against the jealousies of the States, should be the most anxious desire of our national legislators; and, for this purpose, they should aim to restrict themselves to general objects in which all may find a benefit, to refrain from touching narrow or local interests, especially those between which a rivalry subsists, to proportion the pressure of taxation accord-

Hosted by Google

ing to the most rigorous justice, to watch equally over the rights of all, and to exact no sacrifices but such as the common good plainly demands.

A weighty argument for limiting government to the simple and general legislation which we have now recommended, though not intimately connected with our main subject, deserves a brief notice. It is found in the great and growing extent of the country. The attention of Congress is already distracted and overwhelmed by the multiplicity of affairs, and every session it is more and more in danger of neglecting its proper objects and doing nothing well. We fear, that the most pressing business is the most frequently postponed. We refer to the claims of individuals on the government; and we call these the most pressing concerns, because the man who has been wronged by an unanticipated operation of the laws or of any public measures, has a right to immediate redress, and because delay of justice may be his ruin. Already we hear angry complaint and derision of the inefficiency of Congress, and the evil will increase, until that body shall select from a bewildering crowd of applications, its appropriate objects, and shall confine itself to a legislation demanded by the general voice, and by the obvious wants of the community.

The principles of legislation now laid down, seem to us to have an important bearing on two great questions, which have already agitated the country, and which, we fear, bode no good to the Union. We refer to the restrictive system and to internal improvement. The first, which proposes to protect certain branches of domestic industry, seems to us singularly wanting in that simplicity and impartiality, which, as we have said, should characterize our legislation. It cannot be un-

Hosted by Google

derstood by the mass of the people, and it will certainly divide them. In the first place, the restrictive system involves a Constitutional difficulty. We of this region, indeed, generally concede to Congress the right of limiting trade in general, or of annihilating particular branches of it, for the encouragement of domestic industry; but the argument for a narrower construction of the Constitution is certainly specious, and certainly strong enough to give to those on whom a tariff may press heavily, the consciousness of being wronged. In the next place, the general question of the expediency of restriction must be allowed by its advocates to be a difficult one. The growing light of the age certainly seems to oppose it, and the statements and reasonings by which it is defended, even if founded in truth, are yet so intricate and so open to objection, that vast numbers even of the enlightened cannot be satisfied of their validity. But, supposing restriction to be admitted, the question as to its extent, as to the kinds of industry which shal. be protected, as to the branches of trade which shall be sacrificed, this question is the most perplexing which can be offered to popular discussion, and cannot fail to awaken cupidity, jealousy, and hatred. From the nature of the case, the protection must be unequally extended, nor can any wisdom balance the losses to which different States will be exposed. A restrictive tariff is necessarily a source of discord. To some portions of the country it must be an evil, nor will they suffer patiently. Disadvantages imposed by nature, communities will bear, but not those which are brought on them by legislation. We have indeed various objections to the whole system of protection. We believe it to be deceptive throughout. We also oppose it, on the ground

Hosted by Google

that our country, in adopting it, abandons its true and honorable position. To this country, above all others, belongs, as its primary duty and interest, the support of liberal principles. It has nothing in its institutions congenial with the maxims of barbarous ages, with the narrow, monopolizing, restrictive legislation of antiquated despotisms. Freedom, in all its forms, is our life, strength, prosperity; and every system at war with it, however speciously maintained, is a contradiction to our character, and, wanting harmony with our spirit, must take something, however silently, from the energy of the institutions which hold us together. As citizens of the world, we grieve that this country should help to prolong prejudices, which even monarchy is outgrowing; should, in imitation of meddling despotisms, undertake to direct the industry and capital of the citizen, and especially should lose sight of that sublime object of philanthropy, the promotion of free, unrestricted commerce through the world. As patriots, we grieve that a precedent has been afforded for a kind of legislation, which, if persisted in, will almost certainly loosen, and may rupture, the Union. The principal excellence of the late tariff is, that it is so constructed as to please no one, that even its friends pronounce it an abomination; for, by offending and injuring all, it excites less animosity in the principal sufferers. Tariffs never will be impartial. They will always, in a greater or less degree, be the results of selfish combinations of private and public men, through which a majority will be secured to particular interests; and such is the blindness of avarice, that to grasp a short-lived, partial good, the infinite blessings of union will be hazarded, and may be thrown away.

If we may be allowed a short digression, we would

Hosted by Google

say, that we have no partiality to tariffs of any kind, not even to those which are laid on imports for the purpose of raising revenue. We suppose that they are necessary at present, especially where they have become the habit of the people, and we are not insensible to the facility they afford for collecting the revenue. But we should rejoice, if by some great improvement in finance, every custom-house could be shut from Maine to Louisiana. The interests of human nature require, that every fetter should be broken from the intercourse of nations, that the most distant countries should exchange all their products, whether of manual or intellectual labor, as freely as the members of the same community. An unrestricted commerce we regard as the most important means of diffusing through the world knowledge, arts, comforts, civilization, religion, and liberty; and to this great cause we would have our country devoted. We will add, that we attach no importance to what is deemed the chief benefit of tariffs, that they save the necessity of direct taxation, and draw from a people a large revenue without their knowledge. In the first place, we say, that a free people ought to know what they pay for freedom, and to pay it joyfully, and that they should as truly scorn to be cheated into the support of their government, as into the support of their children. In the next place, a large revenue is no blessing. An overflowing treasury will always be corrupting to the governors and the governed. A revenue, rigorously proportioned to the wants of a people, is as much as can be trusted safely to men in power. The only valid argument against substituting direct for indirect taxation, is the difficulty of ascertaining with precision the property of the citizen. Happy would it

Hosted by Google

be for us, could tariffs be done away, for with them would be abolished fruitful causes of national jealousies, of war, of perjury, of smuggling, of innumerable frauds and crimes, and of harassing restraint on that commerce which should be free as the winds.

We consider many of the remarks made in reference to tariffs as applicable to internal improvements. These also involve a Constitutional question of no small difficulty; and it seems impossible that they should be prosecuted with any degree of impartiality. We will not say, that an extensive system of internal improvements, comprehending and connecting the whole country, and promising great, manifest, and universal good, may not be framed. But let Congress propose narrow, local improvements, and we need no prophet to foretell the endless and ever-multiplying intrigues, the selfish combinations, the jealousies, and discontents which will follow by a necessity as sure as the laws of nature. An irresistible temptation will be offered to unprincipled bargains between states and legislators, and the treasury, sending out partial streams, will become a fountain of bitterness and discord.

Let it not be said, that most of the proposed improvements are designed to promote intercourse, and that thus they favor what we conceive to be the great end of government, by binding us together. We answer, that the General Government already promotes intercourse incomparably more than all other causes combined, and we are unwilling to put to hazard this actual beneficent influence by striving to extend it. Government already does more for this object than all the canals, railroads, and other internal improvements, which human ingenuity can devise, and this it does by that

Hosted by Google

negative influence, which, as we have often said, is its chief function. This it does by making us one people, by preserving us from being broken into different communities, by preventing those obstructions to a free interchange of commodities, which, in case of disunion, would at once rise up between us; by preserving us from national rivalries, from the war of tariffs, and from open and ruinous hostility. We grant that cases may occur, in which national advantage may be lost, or useful objects delayed, for want of positive interference of government in the work of internal improvement. But the wisdom of nations, like that of individuals, consists very much in a willingness to forego near and inferior benefits for permanent security. We have, however, little apprehension of much injury resulting from the forbearance of government in this particular. Let Congress hold us together, and keep us in peace, and the spirit of the people will not slumber. It will pour itself forth through our state governments, through corporations, and through individual enterprise; and who that observes what it has already done can set limits to its efficiency? Since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, nothing has contributed so much to extend intercourse through the States as the invention of steamboats. No legislation, and no possible direction of the revenue to public improvements, could have effected so much as the steam-engine; and this was contrived, perfected, and applied to navigation by the genius and wealth of individuals. Next to this agent, the most important service to internal communication has been rendered by the New-York Canal, and this was the work of a State. With such examples, we need not fear, that our progress will be arrested by the confinement of

Hosted by Google

the General Government to general objects. We are not sure, that, were every objection which we have stated removed, we should be anxious to interest our national legislature in public improvements. As a people, we want no new excitement. Our danger is from over action, from impatient and selfish enterprise, from feverish energy, from too rapid growth, rather than from stagnation and lethargy. A calm, sober, steady government is what we chiefly need. May it be kept from the hands of theorists and speculators.

We have not yet exhausted the question, how government may best strengthen and perpetuate our Union. There is one of its establishments, which, in this point of view, we highly value, and which we fear is not sufficiently prized for the highest benefit which it confers. We refer to the Post-office. The facilities which this institution affords to the government for communication with all parts of the country, are probably regarded by many as the most important national service which it renders. But it does incomparably more for us as a community. It does much towards making us one, by admitting free communication between distant parts of the country, which no other channel of intercourse could bring together. It binds the whole country in a chain of sympathies, and makes it in truth one great neighbourhood. It promotes a kind of society between the seashore and the mountains. It perpetuates friendships between those who are never to meet again. It binds the family in the new settlement and the half-cleared forest to the cultivated spot from which it emigrated. It facilitates, beyond calculation, commercial connexions, and the interchange of products. On this account, we always grieve to see a statement of the

Hosted by Google

revenue accruing to government from the Post-office. It ought not to yield a cent to the treasury. It should simply support itself. Such importance do we attach to the freest communication between all parts of the country, so much do we desire that the poor, as well as rich, may enjoy the means of intercourse, that we would sooner have the Post-office a tax on the revenue, than one of its sources.

We pass to another method by which the government is to strengthen the Union. We know not a more important one. It is, to give dignity and independence to the National Judiciary. Let Congress feel, let the people feel, that to this department the security of the Union is especially committed, that it is the great preservative power among our institutions, and that its sanctity cannot be too jealously protected. Its office is, to settle peacefully the questions between the different States and their citizens, which, without it, would be settled by arms. What beneficence and dignity belong to this function! Nor is this all. It affords to citizens, who feel themselves aggrieved by what they deem an unconstitutional law, the means of peaceful resistance. It gives them an opportunity of being heard before a tribunal, on which the most solemn obligations to justice are laid, and which is eminently fitted to be an umpire between the citizen and the legislature. We know not how government can contribute more effectually to its own stability, than by reverencing and guarding the rights of the National Judiciary. A Congress, which should trench on its independence, ought to be counted guilty of a species of sacrilege.

From considering the importance of the Judiciary to our Union, we are naturally led to another department

Hosted by Google

of the government, and one which is particularly worthy of attention, because at the present moment it seems to menace our confederation more seriously than any other cause. We refer to the Executive Department. We refer to the struggles which the election to the Presidency has again and again provoked. These are too solemn and fearful to be overlooked. A remedy must be found, or the country will be thrown into perpetual convulsions, and split into factions devoted each to a chief. We shall waste ourselves in struggles for a few leaders, who by their prominence will become dearer to a people than their institutions, and in fighting for our favorites we may become their slaves.

This evil we regard as a growing one ; and we know but one remedy for it. The people must acquire a just self-respect. This they want. It has been repressed by false notions about government, which have come down from ages of monarchy. The spirit of freedom, of which we so much boast, has not yet given a due elevation of sentiment to the community ; and therefore the community basely binds itself to leaders as if they were its superiors. A people should understand its own greatness and dignity too well to attach much importance to any individual. It should regard no individual as necessary to it, nor should it suffer any one to urge his claims on its gratitude. It should feel, that it has a right to the services of its members, and that there is no member with whose services it cannot dispense. It should have no idols, no favorites. It should annihilate with its frown, those who would monopolize its power, or bring it into subserviency to their own glory. No man's name should be much on its lips. It should bind up in no man its prosperity and honor.

Hosted by Google

A free community, indeed, has need of a presiding officer, but it depends on no individual as alone fitted for the office; and still more, it needs a President, not to be its master, but to express and execute its own will. This last thought is fundamental, and never to be forgotten. The only law of a free people is the will of the majority, or public sentiment; and to collect, embody, utter, and execute this, is the great end of its civil institutions. Self-government is its great attribute, its supreme distinction, and this gives to office in a free state an entirely different character from what it possesses in despotic countries. The difference, however, is overlooked among us, and the same importance is attached to office, as if it conferred absolute power.

We repeat it, the supreme law in a free state is its own will, and consequently, among such a people, the highest power does not necessarily belong to him who is clothed with office, but to him who does most, in whatever sphere, to guide and determine the public mind. Office is a secondary influence, and indeed its most enviable distinction consists in the opportunities which it affords for swaying the opinions and purposes of the community. The nominal legislator is not always the real one. He is often the organ of superior minds, and, if the people be truly free, his chief function is, to give form and efficiency to the general will. Even in monarchies, where a free press is enjoyed, the power passes more and more from the public functionary to the master-spirits who frame the nation's mind. Thus the pen of Burke rivalled the sceptre of his sovereign. The progress of freedom and of society is marked by this fact, that official gives place to personal, intellectual, and moral dignity. It is a bad omen, where office

Hosted by Google

is thought the supreme good, and where a people sees in the public functionary, not an organ of its own will, but a superior being, on whom its peace and happiness depend.

We mean not to deny the necessity of office. We know that the President fills an important place. We know that the community has an interest in his integrity and wisdom, and that it is disgraced and injured by placing an incompetent or unprincipled man in the most conspicuous station. To the President are confided important functions, but not such functions as can be discharged only by one or two individuals in the country, not such as ought to make him an object of idolatry or dread, not such as should draw to him any extraordinary homage, not such as to justify intense desire in the candidate, or intense excitement in the people. Under institutions really free, no office can exist, which deserves the struggles of ambition. Did our Constitution create such an office, it would prove its authors to have been blind or false to their country's dignity and rights. But that noble charter is open to no such reproach. The Presidency, the highest function in the state, is exceedingly bounded by the Constitution, and still more by the spirit of the community. A President has been, and may often be, one of the least efficient men in the government. We need not go far for proof. In both houses of Congress there were men, whose influence over the country was greater than that of the last President. He indeed contributed to keep the wheel of government in motion. But we ask, What new impulse did he give it? What single important measure did he originate? Was there a man in office more fettered and thwarted? We talk of the administrations

Hosted by Google

of Mr. Monroe and Mr. Adams. We ask, What impression of themselves have they left on legislation and on public affairs? They gave no spring to the public mind. A popular senator or representative did more to sway the community. And this is as it should be. We rejoice, that official influence is so restricted, that the people are not mere echoes of a single voice, that no man can master his fellow-citizens, that there is a general, all-pervading intelligence, which modifies, controls, and often neutralizes, the opinion and will of the highest public functionary.

We have spoken of the Presidency as it has actually existed, and as it must in a great measure exist whilst we are free; and yet, through a delusion which has come down from past ages, this office, so limited in power, so obstructed by the legislative branches and by public opinion, which is conferred on the individual at the longest but for eight years, and from which he retires to a seclusion, where scarcely an eye follows, or a voice of approbation cheers him, this office, to our disgrace, is coveted by an insane ambition, as if it were an hereditary throne, and the people are as much excited and disturbed, when called to fill it, as if they were choosing a master for life at whose feet the country was to be laid an unprotected victim. To our shame be it said, for the last eight years every interest of the nation has been postponed to the comparatively inferior concern of choosing a President. The national legislature, forgetting its appointment to watch over the general weal, has wasted and worse than wasted its annual sessions in intrigues for the advancement of rival candidates. The most important measures have been discussed and decided, not with reference to the country,

Hosted by Google

but chiefly according to their bearings on what has been called the Presidential election. So sadly have we wanted the self-respect which belongs to freemen! In these disgraceful transactions, in this shameful excitement spread through the community, we see, that, as a people, we have not drunk as deeply as we imagine into the lofty spirit of liberty. In proportion as a people become free, in proportion as public sentiment reigns, office ceases to be a distinction, political ambition expires, the prizes of political ambition are withdrawn, the self-respect of the people preserves it from bowing to favorites or idols. Whilst it is the characteristic of despotism, that the ruler is every thing and the people comparatively nothing, the reverse is the grand distinction of a free state. This distinction we have yet to learn; and it cannot be learned too thoroughly. Unless we are preserved by a just self-respect from dividing into factions for the elevation of leaders, we shall hold our Union and our rights by a very uncertain tenure. Better were it to choose a President by lot from a hundred names to which each State shall contribute its fair proportion, than repeat the degrading struggle through which we have recently passed.

We close this topic by entreating our citizens to remember the great argument in favor of hereditary monarchy. It may be expressed in few words. "The highest office in a nation," says the monarchist, "ought to be hereditary, because it is an object too dazzling and exciting to be held up for competition. Such a prize, offered to the aspiring, must inflame to madness the lust of power, and engender perpetual strife. A people having such a gift to bestow will be exposed to perpetual arts and machinations. Its passions will

Hosted by Google

never be allowed to sleep. Factions, headed by popular chiefs and exasperated by conflict, will at length resort to force, and, in the storms which will follow, the Constitution will be prostrated, and the supreme power be the prey of a successful usurper. The peace and stability of a nation demand, that the supreme power should be placed above rivalry, and beyond the hopes of ambition, and this can only be done by making it hereditary." Such is the grand argument in favor of monarchy. As a people, we have done too much to confirm it. It is time that we proved ourselves more loyal to freedom. We shall do well to remember, that a republic, broken into parties which have the chief magistracy for their aim, and thrown into perpetual agitation by the rivalry of popular leaders, is lending a mournful testimony to the reasonings of monarchists, and accelerating the fulfilment of their sinister forebodings.

Much remains to be said of the means of perpetuating the Union, and of the dangers to which it is exposed. But we want time to prosecute the subject. The injuries with which the confederation is menaced by party spirit and a sectional spirit, are too obvious to need exposition. The importance of a national literature to our Union and honor, deserves particular consideration. But the topic is too great for our present limits, and we reserve it for future discussion.*

We intended to close this article with some remarks on the conduct of the different parties in this country in relation to the Union, for the purpose of showing that all have occasionally been wanting in fidelity to

* [The "Remarks on National Literature," p. 243, having been subsequently written, ought to have followed the present article. — *Ed.*]

Hosted by Google

it. But the subject would necessarily expand itself beyond the space allowed us. Still we cannot wholly abandon it. One branch of it is particularly recommended to us by the Correspondence at the head of this review. The merits or the demerits of the Federal party in respect to our Union, seem to be in a measure forced on our consideration; and we are the more willing to give a few thoughts to the topic, because we think that we understand it, and because we trust that we can treat it dispassionately. Our attachment to this party we have no desire to conceal; but our ideas of the allegiance due to a party are exceedingly liberal. We claim the privilege of censuring those with whom we generally agree; and we indignantly disclaim the obligation of justifying in the mass whatever they may please to do. Of the Federalists therefore we shall speak freely. We have no desire to hide what we deem to be their errors. They belong now to history, and the only question is, how their history may be made most useful to their country and to the cause of freedom. Before we proceed, however, we beg to remark, that in this, as in every part of the present review, we write from our own convictions alone, that we hold no communication with political leaders, and that we are far from being certain of the reception which our views will meet from our best friends.

A purer party than that of the Federalists, we believe, never existed under any government. Like all other combinations it indeed contained weak and bad men. In its prosperity, it drew to itself seekers for office. Still, when we consider that it enjoyed the confidence of Washington to his last hour; that its leaders were his chosen friends; that it supported and strength-

Hosted by Google

ened his whole administration; that it participated with him in the proclamation and system of neutrality, through which that great man served his country as effectually as during the revolutionary war; when we consider, that it contributed chiefly to the organization of the Federal Government in the civil, judicial, financial, military, and naval departments; that it carried the country safely and honorably through the most tempestuous days of the French Revolution; that it withstood the frenzied tendencies of multitudes to alliance with that power, and that it averted war with Great Britain during a period, when such a war would have bowed us into ruinous subserviency to the despot of France; when we consider these things, we feel, that the debt of this country to the Federal party is never to be extinguished.

Still we think, that this party in some respects failed of its duty to the cause of the Union and of freedom. But it so failed, not through treachery; for truer spirits the world could not boast. It failed through despondence. Here was the rock on which Federalism split. Too many of its leading men wanted a just confidence in our free institutions and in the moral ability of the people to uphold them. Appalled by the excesses of the French Revolution, by the extinction of liberty in that republic, and by the fanaticism with which the cause of France was still espoused among ourselves, they began to despair of their own country. The sympathies of the majority of our people with the despotism of France, were indeed a fearful symptom. There seemed a fascination in that terrible power. An insane admiration for the sworn foe of freedom, joined with as deadly a hatred towards England, so far pervaded the

Hosted by Google

country, that to the Federalists we seemed enlisted as a people on the side of despotism, and fated to sink under its yoke. That they had cause for fear, we think. That they were criminal in the despondence to which they yielded, we also believe. They forgot, that great perils call on us for renewed efforts, and for increased sacrifices in a good cause. That some of them considered the doom of the country as sealed, we have reason to believe. Some, disappointed and irritated, were accustomed to speak in bitter scorn of institutions, which, bearing the name of free, had proved unable to rescue us from base subserviency to an all-menacing despot. The Federalists as a body wanted a just confidence in our national institutions. They wanted that faith, which hopes against hope, and which freedom should inspire. Here was their sin, and it brought its penalty; for, through this more than any cause, they were driven from power. By not confiding in the community, they lost its confidence. By the depressed tone with which they spoke of liberty, their attachment to it became suspected. The taint of anti-republican tendencies was fastened upon them by their opponents, and this reproach no party could survive.

We know not in what manner we can better communicate our views of the Federal party, of its merits and defects, than by referring to that distinguished man, who was so long prominent in its ranks; we mean the late George Cabot. If any man in this region deserved to be called its leader, it was he, and a stronger proof of its political purity cannot be imagined, than is found in the ascendency which this illustrious individual maintained over it. He was the last man to be charged with a criminal ambition. His mind rose far above

Hosted by Google

office. The world had no station which would have tempted him from private life. But in private life, he exerted the sway which is the worthiest prize of a lofty ambition. He was consulted with something of the respect which was paid to an ancient oracle, and no mind among us contributed so much to the control of public affairs. It is interesting to inquire by what intellectual attributes he gained this influence; and, as his character now belongs to history, perhaps we may render no unacceptable service in delineating its leading features.

We think, that he was distinguished by nothing so much as by the power of ascending to general principles, and by the reverence and constancy with which he adhered to them. The great truths of history and experience, the immutable laws of human nature, according to which all measures should be framed, shone on his intellectual eye with an unclouded brightness. No impatience of present evils, no eagerness for immediate good, ever tempted him to think, that these might be forsaken with impunity. To these he referred all questions on which he was called to judge, and accordingly his conversation had a character of comprehensive wisdom, which, joined with his urbanity, secured to him a singular sway over the minds of his hearers. With such a mind, he of course held in contempt the temporary expedients and motley legislation of commonplace politicians. He looked with singular aversion on every thing factitious, forced, and complicated in policy. We have understood, that by the native strength and simplicity of his mind, he anticipated the lights, which philosophy and experience have recently thrown on the importance of leaving enterprise, industry, and com-

Hosted by Google

merce free. He carried into politics the great axiom which the ancient sages carried into morals, "Follow Nature." In an age of reading, he leaned less than most men on books. A more independent mind our country perhaps has not produced. When we think of his whole character, when with the sagacity of his intellect we combine the integrity of his heart, the dignified grace of his manners, and the charm of his conversation, we hardly know the individual, with the exception of Washington, whom we should have offered more willingly to a foreigner as a specimen of the men whom America can produce.

Still we think, that his fine qualities were shaded by what to us is a great defect, though to some it may appear a proof of his wisdom. He wanted a just faith in man's capacity of freedom, at least in that degree of it which our institutions suppose. He inclined to dark views of the condition and prospects of his country. He had too much the wisdom of experience. He wanted what may be called the wisdom of hope. In man's past history he read too much what is to come, and measured our present capacity of political good too much by the unsuccessful experiments of former times. We apprehend, that it is possible to make experience too much our guide; and such was the fault of this distinguished man. There are seasons, in human affairs, of inward and outward revolution, when new depths seem to be broken up in the soul, when new wants are unfolded in multitudes, and a new and undefined good is thirsted for. These are periods, when the principles of experience need to be modified, when hope and trust and instinct claim a share with prudence in the guidance of affairs, when in truth *to dare* is the highest

Hosted by Google

wisdom. Now, in the distinguished man of whom we speak, there was little or nothing of that enthusiasm, which, we confess, seems to us sometimes the surest light. He lived in the past, when the impulse of the age was towards the future. He was slow to promise himself any great melioration of human affairs; and, whilst singularly successful in discerning the actual good, which results from the great laws of nature and Providence, he gave little hope that this good was to be essentially enlarged. To such a man, the issue of the French Revolution was a confirmation of the saddest lessons of history, and these lessons he applied too faithfully to his own country. His influence in communicating skeptical, disheartening views of human affairs, seems to us to have been so important as to form a part of our history; and it throws much light on what we deem the great political error of the Federalists.

That the Federalists did at one period look with an unworthy despondence on our institutions, is true. Especially when they saw the country, by a declaration of war against England, virtually link itself with that despotism which menaced the whole civilized world, their hearts sunk within them; and we doubt not, that, in some cases, their mixed anger and gloom broke forth in reckless speeches, which, to those who are ignorant of the workings of the passions, might seem to argue a scorn for the confederation and for all its blessings. So far they failed of their duty; for a good citizen is never to despair of the republic, never to think freedom a lost cause.

The political sin of the Federal party we have stated plainly. In the other great party, examples of unfaithfulness to the Union might also be produced. Who

Hosted by Google

ever reverts to the language of Virginia on the subject of the alien and sedition laws, or to the more recent proceedings and declarations of Georgia in respect to the Indian territories within her jurisdiction, or to the debates and resolutions of the legislature of South Carolina at its last session, will learn, that a sense of the sacredness of the Union and of the greatness of its blessings, is but faintly apprehended, even by that party which boasts of unfaltering adherence to it.

In closing this article, we are aware that we have said much, in which many of our fellow-citizens will not concur. Men of all parties will probably dissent from some of our positions. But has not the time come, when the vassalage of party may be thrown off? when we may speak of the past and present, without asking whether our opinion will be echoed by this or that class of politicians? when we may cease to condemn and justify in the mass? when a more liberal and elevated style of discussion may be introduced? when we may open our eyes on the faults of our friends, and may look at subjects which involve our country's welfare, in the broad, clear light of day? This style of discussion we are anxious to promote; and we feel, that whoever may encourage and diffuse it, will deserve a place among the most faithful friends of freedom.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

REMARKS

ON

EDUCATION.

AMERICAN ANNALS OF EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTION. Edited by William C. Woodbridge. Boston. 8vo.

THE work, of which we have placed the title at the head of this article, is devoted to what is generally acknowledged to be the most important interest of families and of the State. It has, therefore, no ordinary claims to patronage, especially as it is the only work of the kind published in the country. We learn, however, that the support now given it, not only falls short of its just claims, but is so insufficient, that, unless its circulation can be extended, it must be abandoned. We are not only grieved at this, but somewhat disappointed; for, although we knew the ruling passion in the community for light and amusing reading, we did hope, that the acknowledged importance of education, and the necessity laid on every parent to watch over and guide the young, would overcome the repugnance to mental labor, and would communicate an interest to details, which, separate from their end, would be dry and repulsive. It seems, however, that the community are more dis-

Hosted by Google

posed to talk of education in general than to enter patiently and minutely into its principles and methods, more disposed to laud it than to labor for it; and on this account we feel ourselves bound to say something, however briefly and rapidly, of the obligation of regarding it as the paramount object of society, and of giving encouragement to those, who maké it their task or who devote themselves to its promotion. We know that we are repeating a thrice-told tale, are inviting attention to principles which the multitude most courteously acknowledge, and as readily forget. But all great truths are apt to grow trite; and if the moral teacher should fail to enforce them, because they are worn by repetition, religious and moral teaching would well nigh cease.

One excellence of the periodical work before us is, that it is pledged to no particular system of education, but starts with the acknowledgment of the great defects of all systems, and with the disposition to receive new lights, come from what quarter they may. It is no partisan. It is the instrument of no sect. It is designed to improve our modes of training the young; to give more generous views of the objects of education and of the discipline by which they may be attained; to increase the efficiency of existing institutions, and to aid in forming new ones more suited to our age and country; to unfold and diffuse those great, universal principles in which men of all parties may be expected to agree, and to point out the applications of them in our families and schools. Its pages are open to original suggestions, to discoveries, to the zealous reformer, and even to the too sanguine innovator. Its aim is, to be a medium of communication for all who think on the subject of education, to furnish new facts to the phi-

Hosted by Google

losopher, and to make known the results of successful experiments. Its liberality gives it one strong claim to support.

Perhaps, if it were more confined in its views, if it were designed to answer the purposes of a party or sect, it would be better sustained. Were it to proscribe one class, and to pander to the bad passions of another, it would not perhaps be obliged to sue for more generous patronage. But is it true, that a work on education cannot find readers without assuming the badge of party? Cannot the greatness of its object secure attention to its teachings? In what class of society ought it not to find friends? What parent has not a deep interest in the improvement of public and private education? What philanthropist does not see in this the chief preparation of a people for his schemes of usefulness? What patriot does not see in this the main security of free institutions? This cause is commended alike to our private and public affections; and must the only periodical devoted to it die through neglect?

We are aware, that there are some, who take an attitude of defence, when pressed with earnest applications on the subject of education. They think its importance overrated. They say, that circumstances chiefly determine the young mind, that the influence of parents and teachers is very narrow, and that they sometimes dwarf and distort, instead of improving the child, by taking the work out of the hand of nature. These remarks are not wholly unfounded. The power of parents is often exaggerated. To strengthen their sense of responsibility, they are often taught, that they are competent to effects, which are not within their reach, and are often discouraged by the greatness of the

Hosted by Google

task to which they are summoned. Nothing is gained by exaggeration. It is true, and the truth need not be disguised, that parents cannot operate at pleasure on the minds and characters of the young. Their influence is limited by their own ignorance and imperfection, by the strength and freedom of the will of the child, and by its connexion, from its breath, with other objects and beings. Parents are not the only educators of their offspring, but must divide the work with other and numerous agents; and in this we rejoice; for, were the young confined to domestic influences, each generation would be a copy of the preceding, and the progress of society would cease. The child is not put into the hands of parents alone. It is not born to hear but a few voices. It is brought at birth into a vast, we may say, an infinite school. The universe is charged with the office of its education. Innumerable voices come to it from all that it meets, sees, feels. It is not confined to a few books anxiously selected for it by parental care. Nature, society, experience, are volumes opened everywhere and perpetually before its eyes. It takes lessons from every object within the sphere of its senses and its activity, from the sun and stars, from the flowers of spring and the fruits of autumn, from every associate, from every smiling and frowning countenance, from the pursuits, trades, professions of the community in which it moves, from its plays, friendships, and dislikes, from the varieties of human character, and from the consequences of its actions. All these, and more than these, are appointed to teach, awaken, develope the mind of the child. It is plunged amidst friendly and hostile influences, to grow by coöperating with the first, and by resisting the last. The circumstances in which

Hosted by Google

we are placed, form, indeed, a most important school, and by their help some men have risen to distinction in knowledge and virtue, with little aid from parents, teachers, and books.

Still the influence of parents and teachers is great. On them it very much depends, whether the circumstances which surround the child shall operate to his good. They must help him to read, interpret, and use wisely the great volumes of nature, society, and experience. They must fix his volatile glance, arrest his precipitate judgment, guide his observation, teach him to link together cause and effect in the outward world, and turn his thoughts inward on his own more mysterious nature. The young, left to the education of circumstances, left without teaching, guidance, restraint, will, in all probability, grow up ignorant, torpid in intellect, strangers to their own powers, and slaves to their passions. The fact, that some children, without aid from parents or schools, have struggled into eminence, no more proves such aid to be useless, than the fact, that some have grown strong under physical exposures which would destroy the majority of the race, would prove the worthlessness of the ordinary precautions which are taken for the security of health.

We have spoken of parents, as possessing, and as bound to exert, an important influence on the young. But they cannot do the whole work of education. Their daily occupation, the necessity of labors for the support of their families, household cares, the duty of watching over the health of their children, and other social relations, render it almost impossible for parents to qualify themselves for much of the teaching which the young require, and often deny them time and opportunity for

Hosted by Google

giving instruction to which they are competent. Hence the need of a class of persons, who shall devote themselves exclusively to the work of education. In all societies, ancient and modern, this want has been felt; the profession of teachers has been known; and to secure the best helps of this kind to children, is one of the first duties of parents, for on these the progress of their children very much depends.

One of the discouraging views of society at the present moment is, that, whilst much is said of education, hardly any seem to feel the necessity of securing to it the best minds in the community, and of securing them at any price. A juster estimate of this office begins to be made in our great cities; but, generally, it seems to be thought that anybody may become a teacher. The most moderate ability is thought to be competent to the most important profession in society. Strange, too, as it may seem, on this point parents incline to be economical. They who squander thousands on dress, furniture, amusements, think it hard to pay comparatively small sums to the instructer; and through this ruinous economy, and this ignorance of the dignity of a teacher's vocation, they rob their children of aid, for which the treasures of worlds can afford no compensation.

There is no office higher than that of a teacher of youth, for there is nothing on earth so precious as the mind, soul, character of the child. No office should be regarded with greater respect. The first minds in the community should be encouraged to assume it. Parents should do all but impoverish themselves, to induce such to become the guardians and guides of their children. To this good, all their show and luxury should be sacrificed. Here they should be lavish, whilst they straiten

Hosted by Google

themselves in every thing else. They should wear the cheapest clothes, live on the plainest food, if they can in no other way secure to their families the best instruction. They should have no anxiety to accumuate property for their children, provided they can place them under influences, which will awaken their faculties, inspire them with pure and high principles, and fit them to bear a manly, useful, and honorable part in the world. No language can express the cruelty or folly of that economy, which, to leave a fortune to a child, starves his intellect, impoverishes his heart. There should be no economy in education. Money should never be weighed against the soul of a child. It should be poured out like water, for the child's intellectual and moral life.

Parents should seek an educator for the young of their families, who will become to them a hearty and efficient friend, counsellor, coadjutor, in their work. If their circumstances will allow it, they should so limit the school, that the instructer may know intimately every child, may become the friend of each, and may converse frequently with them in regard to each. He should be worthy of their confidence, should find their doors always open, should be among their most welcome guests, and should study with them the discipline which the peculiarities of each pupil may require. He should give the parents warning of the least obliquity of mind which he discovers at school, should receive in return their suggestions as to the injudiciousness of his own methods in regard to one or another child, and should concert with them the means of arresting every evil at its first manifestation. Such is the teacher we need, and his value cannot be paid in gold. A man of distinguished ability and virtue, whose mind should

Hosted by Google

be concentrated in the work of training as many children as he can thoroughly understand and guide, would shed a light on the path of parents for which they often sigh, and would give an impulse to the young, little comprehended under our present modes of teaching. No profession should receive so liberal remuneration. We need not say how far the community fall short of this estimate of the teacher's office. Very many send their children to school, and seldom or never see the instructer, who is operating daily and deeply on their minds and characters. With a blind confidence, perhaps they do not ask how that work is advancing, on which the dearest interests of the family depend. Perhaps they put the children under the daily control of one, with whom they do not care to associate. Perhaps, were they told what they ought to pay for teaching, they would stare as if a project for robbing them were on foot, or would suspect the sanity of the friend, who should counsel them to throw away so much money in purchasing that cheapest of all articles, that drug in every market, instruction for their children.

We know not how society can be aided more than by the formation of a body of wise and efficient educators. We know not any class which would contribute so much to the stability of the state, and to domestic happiness. Much as we respect the ministry of the Gospel, we believe that it must yield in importance to the office of training the young. In truth, the ministry now accomplishes little for want of that early intellectual and moral discipline, by which alone a community can be prepared to distinguish truth from falsehood, to comprehend the instructions of the pulpit, to receive higher and broader views of duty, and to apply general

Hosted by Google

principles to the diversified details of life. A body of cultivated men, devoted, with their whole hearts, to the improvement of education, and to the most effectual training of the young, would work a fundamental revolution in society. They would leaven the community with just principles. Their influence would penetrate our families. Our domestic discipline would no longer be left to accident and impulse. What parent has not felt the need of this aid, has not often been depressed, heart-sick, under the consciousness of ignorance in the great work of swaying the youthful mind!

We have spoken of the office of the education of human beings, as the noblest on earth, and have spoken deliberately. It is more important than that of the statesman. The statesman may set fences round our property and dwellings; but how much more are we indebted to him, who calls forth the powers and affections of those for whom our property is earned, and our dwellings are reared, and who renders our children objects of increasing love and respect. We go further. We maintain, that higher ability is required for the office of an educator of the young, than for that of a statesman. The highest ability is that, which penetrates farthest into human nature, comprehends the mind in all its capacities, traces out the laws of thought and moral action, understands the perfection of human nature and how it may be approached, understands the springs, motives, applications, by which the child is to be roused to the most vigorous and harmonious action of all its faculties, understands its perils, and knows how to blend and modify the influences which outward circumstances exert on the youthful mind. The speculations of statesmen are shallow, compared with these. It is the chief

Hosted by Google

function of the statesman to watch over the outward interests of a people; that of the educator to quicken its soul. The statesman must study and manage the passions and prejudices of the community; the educator must study the essential, the deepest, the loftiest principles of human nature. The statesman works with coarse instruments for coarse ends; the educator is to work by the most refined influences on that delicate, ethereal essence, the immortal soul.

Nothing is more common than mistakes as to the comparative importance of the different vocations of life. Noisy, showy agency, which is spread over a great surface, and therefore seldom penetrates beneath the surface, is called glory. Multitudes are blinded by official dignity, and stand wondering at a pigmy, because he happens to be perched on some eminence in church or state. So the declaimer, who can electrify a crowd by passionate appeals, or splendid images, which give no clear perceptions to the intellect, which develope no general truth, which breathe no firm, disinterested purpose, passes for a great man. How few reflect, that the greater man is he, who, without noise or show, is wisely fixing in a few minds broad, pregnant, generous principles of judgment and action, and giving an impulse which will carry them on for ever. Jesus, with that divine wisdom which separates him from all other teachers, declared, that the first requisite for becoming "great in his kingdom," which was another phrase for exerting a great moral influence, was Humility; by which he meant a spirit opposed to that passion for conspicuous station with which he saw his disciples inflamed, a spirit of deep, unpretending philanthropy, manifested in sympathy with the wants of the mind,

Hosted by Google

and in condescension to any efforts by which the ignorant and tempted might be brought to truth and virtue. According to these views, we think it a greater work to educate a child, in the true and large sense of that phrase, than to rule a state.

Perhaps the direction which benevolence is taking at the present day, has some influence in turning from the office of education the high honor which is its due. Benevolence is now directing itself very much to public objects, to the alleviation of misery on a grand scale, to the conversion of whole nations, to the instruction of large bodies, and in this form it draws the chief notice and admiration of multitudes. Now we are far from wishing to confine this action of charity. We respect it, and recognise in it one of the distinctive fruits of Christianity. But it must not be forgotten, that the purest benevolence is that which acts on Individuals, and is manifested in our particular, social, domestic relations. It requires no great improvement in charity, to sympathize with the degradation and misery, into which the millions of India are sunk by the worship of Juggernaut, and other superstitions. It is a higher action of the intellect and heart, to study and understand thoroughly the character of an individual who is near us, to enter into his mind, to trace his defects and sufferings to their true springs, to bear quietly and gently with his frowardness and relapses, and to apply to him patiently and encouragingly the means of intellectual and moral elevation. It is not the highest attainment to be benevolent, to those who are thousands of miles from us, whose miseries make striking pictures for the imagination, who never cross our paths, never interfere with our interests, never try us by their waywardness, never

Hosted by Google

shock us by their coarse manners, and whom we are to assist by an act of bounty, which sends a missionary to their aid. The truest mode of enlarging our benevolence, is not to quicken our sensibility towards great masses, or wide-spread evils, but to approach, comprehend, sympathize with, and act upon, a continually increasing number of individuals. It is the glory of God to know, love, and act on, every individual in his infinite creation. Let us, if we can, do good far and wide. Let us send light and joy, if we can, to the ends of the earth. The charity, which is now active for distant objects, is noble. We only wish to say, that it ranks behind the obscurer philanthropy, which, while it sympathizes with the race, enters deeply into the minds, wants, interests of the individuals within its reach, and devotes itself patiently and wisely to the task of bringing them to a higher standard of intellectual and moral worth.

We would suggest it to those who are anxious to do good on a grand and imposing scale, that *they* should be the last to cast into the shade the labors of the retired teacher of the young; because education is the germ of all other improvements, and because all their schemes for the progress of society must fail without it. How often have the efforts of the philanthropist been foiled, by the prejudices and brutal ignorance of the community which he has hoped to serve, by their incapacity of understanding him, of entering into and coöperating with his views! He has cast his seed on the barren sand, and of course reaped no fruit but disappointment. Philanthropists are too apt to imagine, that they can accomplish particular reformations, or work particular changes in a society, although no foundation for these improve-

Hosted by Google

ments has been laid in its intellectual and moral culture. They expect a people to think and act wisely in special cases, although generally wanting in intelligence, sound judgment, and the capacity of understanding and applying the principles of reason. But this partial improvement is a vain hope. The physician, who should spend his skill on a diseased limb, whilst all the functions were deranged, and the principle of life almost extinguished, would get no credit for skill. To do men permanent good, we must act on their whole nature, and especially must aid, foster, and guide their highest faculties, at the first period of their developement. If left in early life to sink into intellectual and moral torpor, if suffered to grow up unconscious of their powers, unused to steady and wise exertion of the understanding, and strangers to the motives which ought to stir and guide human activity, they will be poor subjects for the efforts of the philanthropist. Benevolence is short-sighted, indeed, and must blame itself for failure, if it do not see in education the chief interest of the human race.

One great cause of the low estimation, in which the teacher is now held, may be found in narrow views of education. The multitude think, that to educate a child is to crowd into its mind a given amount of knowledge, to teach the mechanism of reading and writing, to load the memory with words, to prepare a boy for the routine of a trade. No wonder, then, that they think almost everybody fit to teach. The true end of education, as we have again and again suggested, is to unfold and direct aright our whole nature. Its office is to call forth power of every kind, power of thought, affection, will, and outward action; power to observe, to reason, to judge, to contrive; power to adopt good ends firmly,

Hosted by Google

and to pursue them efficiently; power to govern our selves, and to influence others; power to gain and to spread happiness. Reading is but an instrument; education is to teach its best use. The intellect was created, not to receive passively a few words, dates, facts, but to be active for the acquisition of Truth. Accordingly, education should labor to inspire a profound love of truth, and to teach the processes of investigation. A sound logic, by which we mean the science or art, which instructs us in the laws of reasoning and evidence, in the true methods of inquiry, and in the sources of false judgments, is an essential part of a good education. And yet how little is done to teach the right use of the intellect, in the common modes of training either rich or poor! As a general rule, the young are to be made, as far as possible, their own teachers, the discoverers of truth, the interpreters of nature, the framers of science. They are to be helped to help themselves. They should be taught to observe and study the world in which they live, to trace the connexions of events, to rise from particular facts to general principles, and then to apply these in explaining new phenomena. Such is a rapid outline of the intellectual education, which, as far as possible, should be given to all human beings; and with this, moral education should go hand in hand. In proportion as the child gains knowledge, he should be taught how to use it well, how to turn it to the good of mankind. He should study the world as God's world, and as the sphere in which he is to form interesting connexions with his fellow-creatures. A spirit of humanity should be breathed into him from all his studies. In teaching geography, the physical and moral condition, the wants, advantages, and striking peculiarities of different nations,

Hosted by Google

and the relations of climates, seas, rivers, mountains, to their characters and pursuits, should be pointed out, so as to awaken an interest in man, wherever he dwells. History should be constantly used to exercise the moral judgment of the young, to call forth sympathy with the fortunes of the human race, and to expose to indignation and abhorrence, that selfish ambition, that passion for dominion, which has so long deluged the earth with blood and woe. And not only should the excitement of just moral feeling be proposed in every study. The science of morals should form an important part of every child's instruction. One branch of ethics should be particularly insisted on by the government. Every school, established by law, should be specially bound to teach the duties of the citizen to the state, to unfold the principles of free institutions, and to train the young to an enlightened patriotism. From these brief and imperfect views of the nature and ends of a wise education, we learn the dignity of the profession to which it is intrusted, and the importance of securing to it the best minds of the community.

On reviewing these hints on the extent of education, we see that one important topic has been omitted. We have said, that it is the office of the teacher to call into vigorous action the mind of the child. He must do more. He must strive to create a thirst, an insatiable craving for knowledge, to give animation to study and make it a pleasure, and thus to communicate an impulse which will endure, when the instructions of the school are closed. The mark of a good teacher is, not only that he produces great effort in his pupils, but that he dismisses them from his care, conscious of having only laid the foundation of knowledge, and anxious and re-

Hosted by Google

solved to improve themselves. One of the sure signs of the low state of instruction among us is, that the young, on leaving school, feel as if the work of intellectual culture were done, and give up steady, vigorous effort for higher truth and wider knowledge. Our daughters at sixteen and our sons at eighteen or twenty have *finished* their education. The true use of a school is, to enable and dispose the pupil to learn through life; and if so, who does not see that the office of teacher requires men of enlarged and liberal minds, and of winning manners, in other words, that it requires as cultivated men as can be found in society. If to drive and to drill were the chief duties of an instructer, if to force into the mind an amount of lifeless knowledge, to make the child a machine, to create a repugnance to books, to mental labor, to the acquisition of knowledge, were the great objects of the school-room, then the teacher might be chosen on the principles which now govern the school-committees in no small part of our country. Then the man who can read, write, cipher, and whip, and will exercise his gifts at the lowest price, deserves the precedence which he now too often enjoys. But if the human being be something more than a block or a brute, if he have powers which proclaim him a child of God, and which were given for noble action and perpetual progress, then a better order of things should begin among us, and truly enlightened men should be summoned to the work of education.

Leaving the subject of instruction, we observe, that there is another duty of teachers, which requires that they should be taken from the class of improved, wise, virtuous men. They are to govern as well as teach. They must preserve order, and for this end must inflict

Hosted by Google

punishment in some of its forms. We know that some philanthropists wish to banish all punishment from the school. We would not discourage their efforts and hopes; but we fear, that the time for this reform is not yet come, and that as long as the want of a wise discipline at home supplies the teacher with so many lawless subjects, he will be compelled to use other restraints than kindness and reason. Punishment, we fear, cannot be dispensed with; but that it ought to be administered most deliberately, righteously, judiciously, and with a wise adaptation to the character of the child, we all feel; and can it then be safely intrusted, as is too much the case, to teachers undisciplined in mind and heart? Corporal punishment at present has a place in almost all our schools for boys, and perhaps in some for girls. It may be necessary. But ought not every parent to have some security, that his child shall not receive a blow, unless inflicted in wisdom, justice, and kindness? And what security can he have for this, but in the improved character of the instructer? We have known mournful effects of injudicious corporal punishment. We have known a blow to alienate a child from his father, to stir up bitter hatred towards his teacher, and to indispose him to study and the pursuit of knowledge. We cannot be too unwilling to place our children under the care of passionate teachers, who, having no rule over their own spirits, cannot of course rule others, or of weak and unskilful teachers, who are obliged to supply by severity the want of a wise firmness. It is wonderful how thoughtlessly parents expose their children to corporal punishment. Our laws have expunged whipping from the penal code, and the felon is exempted from this in dignity. But how many boys are subjected to a whip-

Hosted by Google

per in the shape of a schoolmaster, whose whole mystery of discipline lies in the ferule. The discipline of a school is of vast importance in its moral influence. A boy compelled for six hours each day to see the countenance and hear the voice of an unfeeling, petulant, passionate, unjust teacher, is placed in a school of vice. He is all the time learning lessons of inhumanity, hard-heartedness, and injustice. The English are considered by the rest of Europe as inclined to cruelty. Their common people are said to be wanting in mercy to the inferior animals and to be ferocious in their quarrels, and their planters enjoy the bad preëminence of being the worst masters in the West Indies, with the exception of the Dutch. It is worth consideration, whether these vices, if they really exist, may not be ascribed in part to the unrestrained, barbarous use of whipping in their schools. Of one thing we are sure, that the discipline of a school has an important influence on the character of a child, and that a just, mild, benevolent teacher, who procures order by methods which the moral sense of his pupils approves, is perpetually spreading around him his own virtues. Should not our teachers then be sought from the class of the most enlightened and excellent men ?

Our limits allow us to add but one more remark on the qualifications of teachers. It is important, that they should be able to coöperate with parents in awakening the religious principle in the young. We would not of course admit into schools the peculiarities of the denominations which divide the Christian world. But religion in its broadest sense should be taught. It should indirectly mix with all teaching. The young mind should be guided through nature and human history to

Hosted by Google

the Creator and Disposer of the Universe; and still more, the practical principles and spirit of Christianity should be matters of direct inculcation. We know no office requiring greater wisdom, and none but the wise and good should be invited to discharge it.

We know that it will be objected to the views now given, that few, very few, will be able to pay for such teachers as we recommend. We believe, however, that there is a large class, who, if they had the will, and would deny themselves as they ought, might procure excellent instructers for their children; and as for the rest, let them do their best, let them but throw their hearts into this cause, and improvements will be effected, which have not been anticipated, perhaps not conceived. We acknowledge, however, that our remarks have been intended chiefly for the opulent. Let an interest in education be awakened in this class, and let more generous means for its promotion be employed, and we are satisfied that the teaching of all classes will be advanced, the talent of the country will be more and more directed to the office of instruction, and the benefit will spread through the whole community.

END OF VOL. I.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D.

TWELFTH COMPLETE EDITION,

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION.

VOL. II.

BOSTON:
CROSBY, NICHOLS, AND COMPANY.
NEW YORK:
C. S. FRANCIS AND COMPANY.
1853.

Hosted by Google

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1843, by
GEORGE G. CHANNING,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

Printed by
MUNROE AND FRANCIS
Boston.

Hosted by Google

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

PAGE

SLAVERY. 5

INTRODUCTION. 7

CHAPTER I. — PROPERTY. 17

II. — RIGHTS. 31

III. — EXPLANATIONS. 51

IV. — THE EVILS OF SLAVERY. 58

V. — SCRIPTURE. 99

VI. — MEANS OF REMOVING SLAVERY. 106

VII. — ABOLITIONISM. 123

VIII. — DUTIES. 138

NOTES. 147

THE ABOLITIONISTS, &c. 155

ON THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS TO THE UNITED STATES. . 181

ON CATHOLICISM, &c. 261

ON CREEDS. 289

ADDRESS ON TEMPERANCE. 299

SELF-CULTURE. 347

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

SLAVERY.

1*

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

SLAVERY.

INTRODUCTION.

The first question to be proposed by a rational being is, not what is profitable, but what is Right. Duty must be primary, prominent, most conspicuous among the objects of human thought and pursuit. If we cast it down from its supremacy, if we inquire first for our interests, and then for our duties, we shall certainly err. We can never see the right clearly and fully, but by making it our first concern. No judgment can be just or wise, but that which is built on the conviction of the paramount worth and importance of duty. This is the fundamental truth, the supreme law of reason; and the mind which does not start from this, in its inquiries into human affairs, is doomed to great, perhaps fatal error.

The right is the supreme good, and includes all other goods. In seeking and adhering to it, we secure our true and only happiness. All prosperity, not founded on it, is built on sand. If human affairs are controlled. as we believe, by Almighty Rectitude and Impartial Goodness, then to hope for happiness from wrong-doing

Hosted by Google

is as insane as to seek health and prosperity by rebelling against the laws of nature, by sowing our seed on the ocean, or making poison our common food. There is but one unfailing good; and that is, fidelity to the Everlasting Law written on the heart, and re-written and republished in God's Word.

Whoever places this faith in the everlasting law of rectitude must, of course, regard the question of slavery first and chiefly as a moral question. All other considerations will weigh little with him, compared with its moral character and moral influences. The following remarks, therefore, are designed to aid the reader in forming a just moral judgment of slavery. Great truths, inalienable rights, everlasting duties, these will form the chief subjects of this discussion. There are times when the assertion of great principles is the best service a man can render society. The present is a moment of bewildering excitement, when men's minds are stormed and darkened by strong passions and fierce conflicts; and also a moment of absorbing worldliness, when the moral law is made to bow to expediency, and its high and strict requirements are denied, or dismissed as metaphysical abstractions or impracticable theories. At such a season, to utter great principles without passion, and in the spirit of unfeigned and universal good-will, and to engrave them deeply and durably on men's minds, is to do more for the world, than to open mines of wealth, or to frame the most successful schemes of policy.

Of late our country has been convulsed by the question of slavery; and the people, in proportion as they have felt vehemently, have thought superficially, or hardly thought at all; and we see the results in a singular want of well-defined principles, in a strange vagueness

Hosted by Google

and inconsistency of opinion, and in the proneness to excess which belongs to unsettled minds. The multitude have been called, now to contemplate the horrors of slavery, and now to shudder at the ruin and bloodshed which must follow emancipation. The word Massacre has resounded through the land, striking terror into strong as well as tender hearts, and awakening indignation against whatever may seem to threaten such a consummation. The consequence is, that not a few dread all discussion of the subject, and, if not reconciled to the continuance of slavery, at least believe that they have no duty to perform, no testimony to bear, no influence to exert, no sentiments to cherish and spread, in relation to this evil. What is still worse, opinions either favoring or extenuating it are heard with little or no disapprobation. Concessions are made to it, which would once have shocked the community; whilst to assail it is pronounced unwise and perilous. No stronger reason for a calm exposition of its true character can be given, than this very state of the public mind. A community can suffer no greater calamity than the loss of its principles. Lofty and pure sentiment is the life and hope of a people. There was never such an obligation to discuss slavery as at this moment, when recent events have done much to unsettle and obscure men's minds in regard to it. This result is to be ascribed in part to the injudicious vehemence of those who have taken into their hands the cause of the slave. Such ought to remember, that to espouse a good cause is not enough. We must maintain it in a spirit answering to its dignity. Let no man touch the great interests of humanity, who does not strive to sanctify himself for the work by cleansing his heart of all wrath and un-

Hosted by Google

charitableness, who cannot hope that he is in a measure baptized into the spirit of universal love. Even sympathy with the injured and oppressed may do harm, by being partial, exclusive, and bitterly indignant. How far the declension of the spirit of freedom is to be ascribed to the cause now suggested, I do not say. The effect is plain, and whoever sees and laments the evil should strive to arrest it.

Slavery ought to be discussed. We ought to think, feel, speak, and write about it. But whatever we do in regard to it should be done with a deep feeling of responsibility, and so done as not to put in jeopardy the peace of the Slave-holding States. On this point public opinion has not been and cannot be too strongly pronounced. Slavery, indeed, from its very nature, must be a ground of alarm wherever it exists. Slavery and security can by no device be joined together. But we may not, must not, by rashness and passion increase the peril. To instigate the slave to insurrection is a crime, for which no rebuke and no punishment can be too severe. This would be to involve slave and master in common ruin. It is not enough to say, that the Constitution is violated by any action endangering the slave-holding portion of our country. A higher law than the Constitution forbids this unholy interference. Were our national union dissolved, we ought to reprobate, as sternly as we now do, the slightest manifestation of a disposition to stir up a servile war. Still more, were the Free and the Slave-holding States not only separated, but engaged in the fiercest hostilities, the former would deserve the abhorrence of the world and the indignation of Heaven, were they to resort to insurrection and massacre as means of victory. Better

Hosted by Google

were it for us to bare our own breasts to the knife of the slave, than to arm him with it against his master.

It is not by personal, direct action on the mind of the slave that we can do him good. Our concern is with the free. With the free we are to plead his cause. And this is peculiarly our duty, because we have bound ourselves to resist his own efforts for his emancipation. We suffer him to do nothing for himself. The more, then, should be done for him. Our physical power is pledged against him in case of revolt. Then our moral power should be exerted for his relief. His weakness, which we increase, gives him a claim to the only aid we can afford, to our moral sympathy, to the free and faithful exposition of his wrongs. As men, as Christians, as citizens, we have duties to the slave, as well as to every other member of the community. On this point we have no liberty. The eternal law binds us to take the side of the injured; and this law is peculiarly obligatory when we forbid him to lift an arm in his own defence.

Let it not be said we can do nothing for the slave. We can do much. We have a power mightier than armies, the power of truth, of principle, of virtue, of right, of religion, of love. We have a power, which is growing with every advance of civilization, before which the slave-trade has fallen, which is mitigating the sternest despotisms, which is spreading education through all ranks of society, which is bearing Christianity to the ends of the earth, which carries in itself the pledge of destruction to every institution which debases humanity. Who can measure the power of Christian philanthropy, of enlightened goodness, pouring itself forth in prayers and persuasions, from the press and

Hosted by Google

pulpit, from the lips and hearts of devoted men, and more and more binding together the wise and good in the cause of their race? All other powers may fail. This must triumph. It is leagued with God's omnipotence. It is God himself acting in the hearts of his children. It has an ally in every conscience, in every human breast, in the wrong-doer himself. This spirit has but begun its work on earth. It is breathing itself more and more through literature, education, institutions, and opinion. Slavery cannot stand before it. Great moral principles, pure and generous sentiments, cannot be confined to this or that spot. They cannot be shut out by territorial lines, or local legislation. They are divine inspirations, and partake of the omnipresence of their Author. The deliberate, solemn conviction of good men through the world, that slavery is a grievous wrong to human nature, will make itself felt. To increase this moral power is every man's duty. To embody and express this great truth is in every man's power; and thus every man can do something to break the chain of the slave.

There are not a few persons, who, from vulgar modes of thinking, cannot be interested in this subject. Because the slave is a degraded being, they think slavery a low topic, and wonder how it can excite the attention and sympathy of those who can discuss or feel for any thing else. Now the truth is, that slavery, regarded only in a philosophical light, is a theme worthy of the highest minds. It involves the gravest questions about human nature and society. It carries us into the problems which have exercised for ages the highest understandings. It calls us to inquire into the foundation, nature, and extent of human rights, into the distinction

Hosted by Google

between a person and a thing, into the true relations of man to man, into the obligations of the community to each of its members, into the ground and laws of property, and, above all, into the true dignity and indestructible claims of a moral being. I venture to say, there is no subject, now agitated by the community, which can compare in philosophical dignity with slavery; and yet to multitudes the question falls under the same contempt with the slave himself. To many, a writer seems to lower himself who touches it. The falsely refined, who want intellectual force to grasp it, pronounce it unworthy of their notice.

But this subject has more than philosophical dignity. It has an important bearing on character. Our interest in it is one test by which our comprehension of the distinctive spirit of Christianity must be judged. Christianity is the manifestation and inculcation of Universal Love. The great teaching of Christianity is, that we must recognise and respect human nature in all its forms in the poorest, most ignorant, most fallen. We must look beneath "the flesh," to "the spirit." The spiritual principle in man is what entitles him to our brotherly regard. To be just to this is the great injunction of our religion. To overlook this, on account of condition or color, is to violate the great Christian law. We have reason to think that it is one design of God, in appointing the vast diversities of human condition, to put to the test, and to bring out most distinctly, the principle of spiritual love. It is wisely ordered, that human nature is not set before us in a few forms of beauty, magnificence, and outward glory. To be dazzled and attracted by these would be no sign of reverence for what is interior and spiritual in human

Hosted by Google

nature. To lead us to discern and love this, we are brought into connection with fellow-creatures whose outward circumstances are repulsive. To recognise our own spiritual nature and God's image in these humble forms, to recognise as brethren those who want all outward distinctions, is the chief way in which we are to manifest the spirit of Him who came to raise the fallen and to save the lost. We see, then, the moral importance of the question of slavery. According to our decision of it, we determine our comprehension of the Christian law. He who cannot see a brother, a child of God, a man possessing all the rights of humanity, under a skin darker than his own, wants the vision of a Christian. He worships the Outward. The spirit is not yet revealed to him. To look unmoved on the degradation and wrongs of a fellow-creature, because burned by a fiercer sun, proves us strangers to justice and love, in those universal forms which characterize Christianity. The greatest of all distinctions, the only enduring one, is moral goodness, virtue, religion. Outward distinctions cannot add to the dignity of this. The wealth of worlds is "not sufficient for a burnt-offering" on its altar. A being capable of this is invested by God with solemn claims on his fellow-creatures. To exclude millions of such beings from our sympathy, because of outward disadvantages, proves, that in whatever else we surpass them, we are not their superiors in Christian virtue.

The spirit of Christianity, I have said, is distinguished by Universality. It is universal justice. It respects all the rights of all beings. It suffers no being, however obscure, to be wronged, without condemning the wrong-doer. Impartial, uncompromising,

Hosted by Google

fearless, it screens no favorites, is dazzled by no power, spreads its shield over the weakest, summons the mightiest to its bar, and speaks to the conscience in tones under which the mightiest have quailed. It is also universal love, comprehending those that are near and those that are far off, the high and the low, the rich and poor, descending to the fallen, and especially binding itself to those in whom human nature is trampled under foot. Such is the spirit of Christianity; and nothing but the illumination of this spirit can prepare us to pass judgment on slavery.

These remarks are intended to show the spirit in which slavery ought to be approached, and the point of view from which it will be regarded in the present discussion. My plan may be briefly sketched.

1. I shall show that man cannot be justly held and used as Property.

2. I shall show that man has sacred rights, the gifts of God, and inseparable from human nature, of which slavery is the infraction.

3. I shall offer some explanations, to prevent misapplication of these principles.

4. I shall unfold the evils of slavery.

5. I shall consider the argument which the Scriptures are thought to furnish in favor of slavery.

6. I shall offer some remarks on the means of removing it.

7. I shall offer some remarks on abolitionism.

8. I shall conclude with a few reflections on the duties belonging to the times.

In the first two sections, I propose to show that slavery is a great wrong, but I do not intend to pass sen-

Hosted by Google

tence on the character of the slave-holder. These two subjects are distinct. Men are not always to be interpreted by their acts or institutions. The same acts in different circumstances admit, and even require, very different constructions. I offer this remark that the subject may be approached without prejudice or personal reference. The single object is to settle great principles. Their bearing on individuals will be a subject of distinct consideration.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER I.

PROPERTY.

THE slave-holder claims the slave as his Property. The very idea of a slave is, that he belongs to another, that he is bound to live and labor for another, to be another's instrument, and to make another's will his habitual law, however adverse to his own. Another owns him, and, of course, has a right to his time and strength, a right to the fruits of his labor, a right to task him without his consent, and to determine the kind and duration of his toil, a right to confine him to any bounds, a right to extort the required work by stripes, a right, in a word, to use him as a tool, without contract, against his will, and in denial of his right to dispose of himself, or to use his power for his own good. "A slave," says the Louisiana code, "is in the power of the master to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry, his labor; he can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire any thing, but which must belong to his master." "Slaves shall be deemed, taken, reputed, and adjudged," say the South-Carolina laws, "to be chattels personal in the hands of their masters, and possessions to all intents and purposes whatsoever." Such is slavery, a claim to man as property.

Now this claim of property in a human being is alto-

Hosted by Google

gether false, groundless. No such right of man in man can exist. A human being cannot be justly owned. To hold and treat him as property is to inflict a great wrong, to incur the guilt of oppression.

This position there is a difficulty in maintaining, on account of its exceeding obviousness. It is too plain for proof. To defend it is like trying to confirm a self-evident truth. To find arguments is not easy, because an argument is something clearer than the proposition to be sustained. The man who, on hearing the claim to property in man, does not see and feel distinctly that it is a cruel usurpation, is hardly to be reached by reasoning, for it is hard to find any plainer principles than what he begins with denying. I will endeavour, however, to illustrate the truth which I have stated.

1. It is plain, that, if one man may be held as property, then every other man may be so held. If there be nothing in human nature, in our common nature, which excludes and forbids the conversion of him who possesses it into an article of property; if the right of the free to liberty is founded, not on their essential attributes as rational and moral beings, but on certain adventitious, accidental circumstances, into which they have been thrown; then every human being, by a change of circumstances, may justly be held and treated by another as property. If one man may be rightfully reduced to slavery, then there is not a human being on whom the same chain may not be imposed. Now let every reader ask himself this plain question: Could I, can I, be rightfully seized, and made an article of property; be made a passive instrument of another's will and pleasure; be subjected to another's irresponsible

Hosted by Google

power; be subjected to stripes at another's will; be denied the control and use of my own limbs and faculties for my own good? Does any man, so questioned, doubt, waver, look about him for an answer? Is not the reply given immediately, intuitively, by his whole inward being? Does not an unhesitating, unerring conviction spring up in my breast, that no other man can acquire such a right in myself? Do we not repel, indignantly and with horror, the thought of being reduced to the condition of tools and chattels to a fellow-creature? Is there any moral truth more deeply rooted in us, than that such a degradation would be an infinite wrong? And, if this impression be a delusion, on what single moral conviction can we rely? This deep assurance, that we cannot be rightfully made another's property, does not rest on the hue of our skins, or the place of our birth, or our strength, or wealth. These things do not enter our thoughts. The consciousness of indestructible rights is a part of our moral being. The consciousness of our humanity involves the persuasion, that we cannot be owned as a tree or a brute. As men, we cannot justly be made slaves. Then no man can be rightfully enslaved. In casting the yoke from ourselves as an unspeakable wrong, we condemn ourselves as wrong-doers and oppressors in laying it on any who share our nature.—It is not necessary to inquire whether a man, by extreme guilt, may not forfeit the rights of his nature, and be justly punished with slavery. On this point crude notions prevail. But the discussion would be foreign to the present subject. We are now not speaking of criminals. We speak of innocent men, who have given us no hold on them by guilt; and our own consciousness is a proof that such

Hosted by Google

cannot rightfully be seized as property by a fellow-creature.

2. A man cannot be seized and held as property, because he has Rights. What these rights are, whether few or many, or whether all men have the same, are questions for future discussion. All that is assumed now is, that every human being has *some* rights. This truth cannot be denied, but by denying to a portion of the race that moral nature which is the sure and only foundation of rights. This truth has never, I believe, been disputed. It is even recognised in the very codes of slave legislation, which, while they strip a man of liberty, affirm his right to life, and threaten his murderer with punishment. Now, I say, a being having rights cannot justly be made property; for this claim over him virtually annuls all his rights. It strips him of all power to assert them. It makes it a crime to assert them. The very essence of slavery is, to put a man defenceless into the hands of another. The right claimed by the master, to task, to force, to imprison, to whip, and to punish the slave, at discretion, and especially to prevent the least resistance to his will, is a virtual denial and subversion of all the rights of the victim of his power. The two cannot stand together. Can we doubt which of them ought to fall?

3. Another argument against property is to be found in the Essential Equality of men. I know that this doctrine, so venerable in the eyes of our fathers, has lately been denied. Verbal logicians, have told us that men are "born equal" only in the sense of being equally born. They have asked whether all are equally tall,

Hosted by Google

strong, or beautiful; or whether nature, Procrustes-like, reduces all her children to one standard of intellect and virtue. By such arguments it is attempted to set aside the principle of equality, on which the soundest moralists have reared the structure of social duty; and in these ways the old foundations of despotic power, which our fathers in their simplicity thought they had subverted, are laid again by their sons.

It is freely granted, that there are innumerable diversities among men; but be it remembered, they are ordained to bind men together, and not to subdue one to the other; ordained to give means and occasions of mutual aid, and to carry forward each and all, so that the good of all is equally intended in this distribution of various gifts. Be it also remembered, that these diversities among men are as nothing in comparison with the attributes in which they agree; and it is this which constitutes their essential equality. All men have the same rational nature and the same power of conscience, and all are equally made for indefinite improvement of these divine faculties, and for the happiness to be found in their virtuous use. Who, that comprehends these gifts, does not see that the diversities of the race vanish before them? Let it be added, that the natural advantages, which distinguish one man from another, are so bestowed as to counterbalance one another, and bestowed without regard to rank or condition in life. Whoever surpasses in one endowment is inferior in others. Even genius, the greatest gift, is found in union with strange infirmities, and often places its possessors below ordinary men in the conduct of life. Great learning is often put to shame by the mother-wit and keen good sense of uneducated men. Nature, indeed, pays

Hosted by Google

no heed to birth or condition in bestowing her favors. The noblest spirits sometimes grow up in the obscurest spheres. Thus equal are men; and among these equals, who can substantiate his claim to make others his property, his tools, the mere instruments of his private interest and gratification? Let this claim begin, and where will it stop? If one may assert it, why not all? Among these partakers of the same rational and moral nature, who can make good a right over others, which others may not establish over himself? Does he insist on superior strength of body or mind? Who of us has no superior in one or the other of these endowments? Is it sure that the slave or the slave's child may not surpass his master in intellectual energy, or in moral worth? Has nature conferred distinctions, which tell us plainly who shall be owners and who be owned? Who of us can unblushingly lift his head and say, that God has written "Master" there? or who can show the word "Slave" engraven on his brother's brow? The equality of nature makes slavery a wrong. Nature's seal is affixed to no instrument by which property in a single human being is conveyed.

4. That a human being cannot be justly held and used as property, is apparent from the very nature of property. Property is an exclusive right. It shuts out all claim but that of the possessor. What one man owns, cannot belong to another. What, then, is the consequence of holding a human being as property? Plainly this. He can have no right to himself. His limbs are, in truth, not morally his own. He has not a right to his own strength. It belongs to another. His will, intellect, and muscles, all the powers of body and

Hosted by Google

mind which are exercised in labor, he is bound to regard as another's. Now, if there be property in any thing, it is that of a man in his own person, mind, and strength. All other rights are weak, unmeaning, compared with this, and, in denying this, all right is denied. It is true, that an individual may forfeit by crime his right to the use of his limbs, perhaps to his limbs, and even to life. But the very idea of forfeiture implies, that the right was originally possessed. It is true, that a man may by contract give to another a limited right to his strength. But he gives only because he possesses it, and gives it for considerations which he deems beneficial to himself; and the right conferred ceases at once on violation of the conditions on which it was bestowed. To deny the right of a human being to himself, to his own limbs and faculties, to his energy of body and mind, is an absurdity too gross to be confuted by any thing but a simple statement. Yet this absurdity is involved in the idea of his belonging to another.

5. We have a plain recognition of the principle now laid down, in the universal indignation excited towards a man who makes another his slave. Our laws know no higher crime than that of reducing a man to slavery. To steal or to buy an African on his own shores, is piracy. In this act the greatest wrong is inflicted, the most sacred right violated. But if a human being cannot without infinite injustice be seized as property, then he cannot without equal wrong be held and used as such. The wrong in the first seizure lies in the destination of a human being to future bondage, to the criminal use of him as a chattel or brute. Can that very use, which makes the original seizure an enormous wrong,

Hosted by Google

become gradually innocent? If the slave receive injury without measure at the first moment of the outrage, is he less injured by being held fast the second or the third? Does the duration of wrong, the increase of it by continuance, convert it into right? It is true, in many cases, that length of possession is considered as giving a right, where the goods were acquired by unlawful means. But in these cases, the goods were such as might justly be appropriated to individual use. They were intended by the Creator to be owned. They fulfil their purpose by passing into the hands of an exclusive possessor. It is essential to rightful property in a thing, that the thing from its nature may be rightfully appropriated. If it cannot originally be made one's own without crime, it certainly cannot be continued as such without guilt. Now the ground, on which the seizure of the African on his own shore is condemned, is, that he is a man, who has by his nature a right to be free. Ought not, then, the same condemnation to light on the continuance of his yoke? Still more. Whence is it, that length of possession is considered by the laws as conferring a right? I answer, from the difficulty of determining the original proprietor, and from the apprehension of unsettling all property by carrying back inquiry beyond a certain time. Suppose, however, an article of property to be of such a nature that it could bear the name of the true original owner stamped on it in bright and indelible characters. In this case, the whole ground, on which length of possession bars other claims, would fail. The proprietor would not be concealed, or rendered doubtful by the lapse of time. Would not he, who should receive such an article from a robber or a succession of robbers, be involved in their guilt? Now

Hosted by Google

the true owner of a human being is made manifest to all. It is Himself. No brand on the slave was ever so conspicuous as the mark of property which God has set on him. God, in making him a rational and moral being, has put a glorious stamp on him, which all the slave legislation and slave-markets of worlds cannot efface. Hence, no right accrues to the master from the length of the wrong which has been done to the slave.

6. Another argument against the right of property in man, may be drawn from a very obvious principle of moral science. It is a plain truth, universally received, that every right supposes or involves a corresponding obligation. If, then, a man has a right to another's person or powers, the latter is under obligation to give himself up as a chattel to the former. This is his duty. He is bound to be a slave; and bound not merely by the Christian law, which enjoins submission to injury, not merely by prudential considerations, or by the claims of public order and peace; but bound because another has a right of ownership, has a moral claim to him, so that he would be guilty of dishonesty, of robbery, in withdrawing himself from this other's service. It is his duty to work for his master, though all compulsion were withdrawn; and in deserting him he would commit the crime of taking away another man's property, as truly as if he were to carry off his owner's purse. Now do we not instantly feel, can we help feeling, that this is false? Is the slave thus morally bound? When the African was first brought to these shores, would he have violated a solemn obligation by slipping his chain, and flying back to his native home? Would he not have been bound to seize the precious opportunity of escape?

Hosted by Google

Is the slave under a moral obligation to confine himself, his wife, and children, to a spot where their union in a moment may be forcibly dissolved? Ought he not, if he can, to place himself and his family under the guardianship of equal laws? Should we blame him for leaving his yoke? Do we not feel, that, in the same condition, a sense of duty would quicken our flying steps? Where, then, is the obligation which would necessarily be imposed, if the right existed which the master claims? The absence of obligation proves the want of the right. The claim is groundless. It is a cruel wrong.

7. I come now to what is to my own mind the great argument against seizing and using a man as property. He cannot be property in the sight of God and justice, because he is a Rational, Moral, Immortal Being; because created in God's image, and therefore in the highest sense his child; because created to unfold godlike faculties, and to govern himself by a Divine Law written on his heart, and republished in God's Word. His whole nature forbids that he should be seized as property. From his very nature it follows, that so to seize him is to offer an insult to his Maker, and to inflict aggravated social wrong. Into every human being God has breathed an immortal spirit, more precious than the whole outward creation. No earthly or celestial language can exaggerate the worth of a human being. No matter how obscure his condition. Thought, Reason, Conscience, the capacity of Virtue, the capacity of Christian Love, an immortal Destiny, an intimate moral connection with God,—here are attributes of our common humanity which reduce to insignificance all outward distinctions, and make every human being un-

Hosted by Google

speakably dear to his Maker. No matter how ignorant he may be. The capacity of Improvement allies him to the more instructed of his race, and places within his reach the knowledge and happiness of higher worlds. Every human being has in him the germ of the greatest idea in the universe, the idea of God; and to unfold this is the end of his existence. Every human being has in his breast the elements of that Divine, Everlasting Law, which the highest orders of the creation obey. He has the idea of Duty; and to unfold, revere, obey this, is the very purpose for which life was given. Every human being has the idea of what is meant by that word, Truth; that is, he sees, however dimly, the great object of Divine and created intelligence, and is capable of ever-enlarging perceptions of truth. Every human being has affections, which may be purified and expanded into a Sublime Love. He has, too, the idea of Happiness, and a thirst for it which cannot be appeased. Such is our nature. Wherever we see a man, we see the possessor of these great capacities. Did God make such a being to be owned as a tree or a brute? How plainly was he made to exercise, unfold, improve his highest powers, made for a moral, spiritual good! and how is he wronged, and his Creator opposed, when he is forced and broken into a tool to another's physical enjoyment!

Such a being was plainly made for an End in Himself. He is a Person, not a Thing. He is an End, not a mere Instrument or Means. He was made for his own virtue and happiness. Is this end reconcilable with his being held and used as a chattel? The sacrifice of such a being to another's will, to another's present, outward, ill-comprehended good, is the greatest

Hosted by Google

violence which can be offered to any creature of God. It is to degrade him from his rank in the universe, to make him a means, not an end, to cast him out from God's spiritual family into the brutal herd.

Such a being was plainly made to obey a Law within Himself. This is the essence of a moral being. He possesses, as a part of his nature, and the most essential part, a sense of Duty, which he is to reverence and follow, in opposition to all pleasure or pain, to all interfering human wills. The great purpose of all good education and discipline is, to make a man Master of Himself, to excite him to act from a principle in his own mind, to lead him to propose his own perfection as his supreme law and end. And is this highest purpose of man's nature to be reconciled with entire subjection to a foreign will, to an outward, overwhelming force, which is satisfied with nothing but complete submission?

The end of such a being as we have described, is, manifestly, Improvement. Now it is the fundamental law of our nature, that all our powers are to improve by free exertion. Action is the indispensable condition of progress to the intellect, conscience, and heart. Is it not plain, then, that a human being cannot, without wrong, be owned by another, who claims, as proprietor, the right to repress the powers of his slaves, to withhold from them the means of developement, to keep them within the limits which are necessary to contentment in chains, to shut out every ray of light and every generous sentiment, which may interfere with entire subjection to his will?

No man, who seriously considers what human nature is, and what it was made for, can think of setting up a claim to a fellow-creature. What! own a spiritual being

Hosted by Google

a being made to know and adore God, and who is to outlive the sun and stars! What! chain to our lowest uses a being made for truth and virtue! convert into a brute instrument that intelligent nature, on which the idea of Duty has dawned, and which is a nobler type of God than all outward creation! Should we not deem it a wrong which no punishment could expiate, were one of our children seized as property, and driven by the whip to toil? And shall God's child, dearer to him than an only son to a human parent, be thus degraded? Every thing else may be owned in the universe; but a moral, rational being cannot be property. Suns and stars may be owned, but not the lowest spirit. Touch any thing but this. Lay not your hand on God's rational offspring. The whole spiritual world cries out, Forbear! The highest intelligences recognise their own nature, their own rights, in the humblest human being. By that priceless, immortal spirit which dwells in him, by that likeness of God which he wears, tread him not in the dust, confound him not with the brute.

We have thus seen, that a human being cannot rightfully be held and used as property. No legislation, not that of all countries or worlds, could make him so. Let this be laid down, as a first, fundamental truth. Let us hold it fast, as a most sacred, precious truth. Let us hold it fast against all customs, all laws, all rank, wealth, and power. Let it be armed with the whole authority of the civilized and Christian world.

I have taken it for granted that no reader would be so wanting in moral discrimination and moral feeling, as to urge, that men may rightfully be seized and held as property, because various governments have so or-

Hosted by Google

dained. What! is human legislation the measure of right? Are God's laws to be repealed by man's? Can government do no wrong? To what a mournful extent is the history of human governments a record of wrongs! How much does the progress of civilization consist in the substitution of just and humane, for barbarous and oppressive laws! The individual, indeed, is never authorized to oppose physical force to unrighteous ordinances of government, as long as the community choose to sustain them. But criminal legislation ought to be freely and earnestly exposed. Injustice is never so terrible, and never so corrupting, as when armed with the sanctions of law. The authority of government, instead of being a reason for silence under wrongs, is a reason for protesting against wrong with the undivided energy of argument, entreaty, and solemn admonition.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER II.

RIGHTS.

I now proceed to the second division of the subject. I am to show, that man has sacred Rights, the gifts of God, and inseparable from human nature, which are violated by slavery. Some important principles, which belong to this head, were necessarily anticipated under the preceding; but they need a fuller exposition. The whole subject of Rights needs to be reconsidered. Speculations and reasonings about it have lately been given to the public, not only false, but dangerous to freedom, and there is a strong tendency to injurious views. Rights are made to depend on circumstances, so that pretences may easily be made or created for violating them successively, till none shall remain. Human rights have been represented as so modified and circumscribed by men's entrance into the social state, that only the shadows of them are left. They have been spoken of as absorbed in the public good; so that a man may be innocently enslaved, if the public good shall so require. To meet fully all these errors, for such I hold them, a larger work than the present is required. The nature of man, his relations to the state, the limits of civil government, the elements of the public good, and the degree to which the individual must be surrendered to

Hosted by Google

this good, these are the topics which the present subject involves. I cannot enter into them particularly, but shall lay down what seem to me the great and true principles in regard to them. I shall show, that man has rights from his very nature, not the gifts of society, but of God; that they are not surrendered on entering the social state; that they must not be taken away under the plea of public good; that the Individual is never to be sacrificed to the Community; that the idea of Rights is to prevail above all the interests of the state.

Man has rights by nature. The disposition of some to deride abstract rights, as if all rights were uncertain, mutable, and conceded by society, shows a lamentable ignorance of human nature. Whoever understands this must see in it an immovable foundation of rights. These are gifts of the Creator, bound up indissolubly with our moral constitution. In the order of things, they precede society, lie at its foundation, constitute man's capacity for it, and are the great objects of social institutions. The consciousness of rights is not a creation of human art, a conventional sentiment, but essential to and inseparable from the human soul.

Man's rights belong to him as a Moral Being, as capable of perceiving moral distinctions, as a subject of moral obligation. As soon as he becomes conscious of Duty, a kindred consciousness springs up, that he has a Right to do what the sense of duty enjoins, and that no foreign will or power can obstruct his moral action without crime. He feels, that the sense of duty was given to him as a Law, that it makes him responsible for himself, that to exercise, unfold, and obey it is the end of his being, and that he has a right to exercise and obey it without hindrance or opposition. A conscious-

Hosted by Google

ness of dignity, however obscure, belongs also to this divine principle; and, though he may want words to do justice to his thoughts, he feels that he has that within him which makes him essentially equal to all around him.

The sense of duty is the fountain of human rights. In other words, the same inward principle, which teaches the former, bears witness to the latter. Duties and Rights must stand or fall together. It has been too common to oppose them to one another; but they are indissolubly joined together. That same inward principle, which teaches a man what he is bound to do to others, teaches equally, and at the same instant, what others are bound to do to *him*. That same voice, which forbids him to injure a single fellow-creature, forbids every fellow-creature to do *him* harm. His conscience, in revealing the moral law, does not reveal a law for himself only, but speaks as a Universal Legislator. He has an intuitive conviction, that the obligations of this divine code press on others as truly as on himself. That principle, which teaches him that he sustains the relation of brotherhood to all human beings, teaches him that this relation is reciprocal, that it gives indestructible claims, as well as imposes solemn duties, and that what he owes to the members of this vast family, they owe to him in return. Thus the moral nature involves rights. These enter into its very essence. They are taught by the very voice which enjoins duty. Accordingly there is no deeper principle in human nature, than the consciousness of rights. So profound, so ineradicable is this sentiment, that the oppressions of ages have nowhere wholly stifled it.

Having shown the foundation of human rights in hu-

Hosted by Google

man nature, it may be asked what they are. Perhaps they do not admit very accurate definition, any more than human duties; for the Spiritual cannot be weighed and measured like the Material. Perhaps a minute criticism may find fault with the most guarded exposition of them; but they may easily be stated in language which the unsophisticated mind will recognise as the truth. Volumes could not do justice to them; and yet, perhaps they may be comprehended in one sentence. They may all be comprised in the right, which belongs to every rational being, to exercise his powers for the promotion of his own and others' Happiness and Virtue. These are the great purposes of his existence. For these his powers were given, and to these he is bound to devote them. He is bound to make himself and others better and happier, according to his ability. His ability for this work is a sacred trust from God, the greatest of all trusts. He must answer for the waste or abuse of it. He consequently suffers an unspeakable wrong, when stripped of it by others, or forbidden to employ it for the ends for which it is given; when the powers, which God has given for such generous uses, are impaired or destroyed by others, or the means for their action and growth are forcibly withheld. As every human being is bound to employ his faculties for his own and others' good, there is an obligation on each to leave all free for the accomplishment of this end; and whoever respects this obligation, whoever uses his own, without invading others' powers, or obstructing others' duties, has a sacred, indefeasible right to be unassailed, unobstructed, unharmed by all with whom he may be connected. Here is the grand, all-comprehending right of human nature. Every man should revere it, should

Hosted by Google

assert it for himself and for all, and should bear solemn testimony against every infraction of it, by whomsoever made or endured.

Having considered the great fundamental right of human nature, particular rights may easily be deduced. Every man has a right to exercise and invigorate his intellect or the power of knowledge, for knowledge is the essential condition of successful effort for every good; and whoever obstructs or quenches the intellectual life in another, inflicts a grievous and irreparable wrong. Every man has a right to inquire into his duty, and to conform himself to what he learns of it. Every man has a right to use the means, given by God and sanctioned by virtue, for bettering his condition. He has a right to be respected according to his moral worth; a right to be regarded as a member of the community to which he belongs, and to be protected by impartial laws; and a right to be exempted from coercion, stripes, and punishment, as long as he respects the rights of others. He has a right to an equivalent for his labor. He has a right to sustain domestic relations, to discharge their duties, and to enjoy the happiness which flows from fidelity in these and other domestic relations. Such are a few of human rights; and if so, what a grievous wrong is slavery!

Perhaps nothing has done more to impair the sense of the reality and sacredness of human rights, and to sanction oppression, than loose ideas as to the change made in man's natural rights by his entrance into civil society. It is commonly said, that men part with a portion of these by becoming a community, a body politic; that government consists of powers surrendered by the individual; and it is said, "If certain rights and powers

Hosted by Google

may be surrendered, why not others? why not all? what limit is to be set? The good of the community, to which a part is given up, may demand the whole; and in this good, all private rights are merged." This is the logic of despotism. We are grieved that it finds its way into republics, and that it sets down the great principles of freedom as abstractions and metaphysical theories, good enough for the cloister, but too refined for practical and real life.

Human rights, however, are not to be so reasoned away. They belong, as we have seen, to man as a moral being, and nothing can divest him of them but the destruction of his nature. They are not to be given up to society as a prey. On the contrary, the great end of civil society is to secure them. The great end of government is to repress *all wrong*. Its highest function is to protect the weak against the powerful, so that the obscurest human being may enjoy his rights in peace. Strange that an institution, built on the idea of Rights, should be used to unsettle this idea, to confuse our moral perceptions, to sanctify wrongs as means of general good!

It is said, that, in forming civil society, the individual surrenders a part of his rights. It would be more proper to say, that he adopts new modes of securing them. He consents, for example, to desist from self-defence, that he and all may be more effectually defended by the public force. He consents to submit his cause to an umpire or tribunal, that justice may be more impartially awarded, and that he and all may more certainly receive their due. He consents to part with a portion of his property in taxation, that his own and others' property may be the more secure. He

Hosted by Google

submits to certain restraints, that he and others may enjoy more enduring freedom. He expects an equivalent for what he relinquishes, and insists on it as his right. He is wronged by partial laws, which compel him to contribute to the state beyond his proportion, his ability, and the measure of benefits which he receives. How absurd is it to suppose, that, by consenting to be protected by the state, and by yielding it the means, he surrenders the very rights which were the objects of his accession to the social compact!

The authority of the state to impose laws on its members I cheerfully allow; but this has limits, which are found to be more and more narrow in proportion to the progress of moral science. The state is equally restrained with individuals by the Moral Law. For example, it may not, must not, on any account, put an innocent man to death, or require of him a dishonorable or criminal service. It may demand allegiance, but only on the ground of the protection it affords. It may levy taxes, but only because it takes all property and all interests under its shield. It may pass laws, but only impartial ones, framed for the whole, and not for the few. It must not seize, by a special act, the property of the humblest individual, without making him an equivalent. It must regard every man, over whom it extends its authority, as a vital part of itself, as entitled to its care and to its provisions for liberty and happiness. If, in an emergency, its safety, which is the interest of each and all, may demand the imposition of peculiar restraints on one or many, it is bound to limit these restrictions to the precise point which its safety prescribes, to remove the necessity of them as far and as fast as possible, to compensate by peculiar

Hosted by Google

protection such as it deprives of the ordinary means of protecting themselves, and, in general, to respect and provide for liberty in the very acts which for a time restrain it. The idea of Rights should be fundamental and supreme in civil institutions. Government becomes a nuisance and scourge, in proportion as it sacrifices these to the many or the few. Government, I repeat it, is equally bound with the individual by the Moral Law. The ideas of Justice and Rectitude, of what is due to man from his fellow-creatures, of the claims of every moral being, are far deeper and more primitive than Civil Polity. Government, far from originating them, owes to them its strength. Right is older than human law. Law ought to be its voice. It should be built on, and should correspond to, the principle of justice in the human breast, and its weakness is owing to nothing more than to its clashing with our indestructible moral convictions.

That government is most perfect, in which Policy is most entirely subjected to Justice, or in which the supreme and constant aim is to secure the rights of every human being. This is the beautiful idea of a free government, and no government is free but in proportion as it realizes this. Liberty must not be confounded with popular institutions. A representative government may be as despotic as an absolute monarchy. In as far as it tramples on the rights, whether of many or one, it is a despotism. The sovereign power, whether wielded by a single hand or several hands, by a king or a congress, which spoils one human being of the immunities and privileges bestowed on him by God, is so far a tyranny. The great argument in favor of representative institutions is, that a people's rights are safest in

Hosted by Google

their own hands, and should never be surrendered to an irresponsible power. Rights, Rights, lie at the foundation of a popular government; and when this betrays them, the wrong is more aggravated than when they are crushed by despotism.

Still the question will be asked, "Is not the General Good the supreme law of the state? Are not all restraints on the individual just, which this demands? When the rights of the individual clash with this, must they not yield? Do they not, indeed, cease to be rights? Must not every thing give place to the General Good?" I have started this question in various forms, because I deem it worthy of particular examination. Public and private morality, the freedom and safety of our national institutions, are greatly concerned in settling the claims of the "General Good." In monarchies, the Divine Right of kings swallowed up all others. In republics, the General Good threatens the same evil. It is a shelter for the abuses and usurpations of government, for the profligacies of statesmen, for the vices of parties, for the wrongs of slavery. In considering this subject, I take the hazard of repeating principles already laid down; but this will be justified by the importance of reaching and determining the truth. Is the General Good, then, the supreme law, to which every thing must bow?

This question may be settled at once by proposing another. Suppose the public good to require, that a number of the members of a state, no matter how few, should perjure themselves, or should disclaim their faith in God and virtue. Would their right to follow conscience and God be annulled? Would they be bound to sin? Suppose a conqueror to menace a state with

Hosted by Google

ruin, unless its members should insult their parents, and stain themselves with crimes at which nature revolts. Must the public good prevail over purity and our holiest affections? Do we not all feel that there are higher goods than even the safety of the state? that there is a higher law than that of mightiest empires? that the idea of Rectitude is deeper in human nature than that of private or public interest? and that this is to bear sway over all private and public acts?

The supreme law of a state is not its safety, its power, its prosperity, its affluence, the flourishing state of agriculture, commerce, and the arts. These objects, constituting what is commonly called the Public Good, are indeed proposed, and ought to be proposed, in the constitution and administration of states. But there is a higher law, even Virtue, Rectitude, the voice of Conscience, the Will of God. Justice is a greater good than property, not greater in degree, but in kind. Universal benevolence is infinitely superior to prosperity. Religion, the love of God, is worth incomparably more than all his outward gifts. A community, to secure or aggrandize itself, must never forsake the Right, the Holy, the Just.

Moral Good, Rectitude in all its branches, is the Supreme Good; by which I do not intend, that it is the surest means to the security and prosperity of the state. Such, indeed, it is, but this is too low a view. It must not be looked upon as a Means, an Instrument. It is the Supreme End, and states are bound to subject to it all their legislation, be the apparent loss of prosperity ever so great. National wealth is not the End. It derives all its worth from national virtue. If accumulated by rapacity, conquest, or any degrading means, or if

Hosted by Google

concentrated in the hands of the few, whom it strengthens to crush the many, it is a curse. National wealth is a blessing, only when it springs from and represents the intelligence and virtue of the community; when it is a fruit and expression of good habits, of respect for the rights of all, of impartial and beneficent legislation; when it gives impulse to the higher faculties, and occasion and incitement to justice and beneficence. No greater calamity can befall a people than to prosper by crime. No success can be a compensation for the wound inflicted on a nation's mind by renouncing Right as its Supreme Law.

Let a people exalt Prosperity above Rectitude, and a more dangerous end cannot be proposed. Public Prosperity, General Good, regarded by itself, or apart from the moral law, is something vague, unsettled, and uncertain, and will infallibly be so construed by the selfish and grasping as to secure their own aggrandizement. It may be made to wear a thousand forms, according to men's interests and passions. This is illustrated by every day's history. Not a party springs up, which does not sanctify all its projects for monopolizing power by the plea of General Good. Not a measure, however ruinous, can be proposed, which cannot be shown to favor one or another national interest. The truth is, that, in the uncertainty of human affairs, an uncertainty growing out of the infinite and very subtile causes which are acting on communities, the consequences of no measure can be foretold with certainty. The best concerted schemes of policy often fail; whilst a rash and profligate administration may, by unexpected concurrences of events, seem to advance a nation's glory. In regard to the means of national prosperity,

Hosted by Google

the wisest are weak judges. For example, the present rapid growth of this country, carrying, as it does, vast multitudes beyond the institutions of religion and education, may be working ruin, whilst the people exult in it as a pledge of greatness. We are too short-sighted to find our law in outward interests. To states, as to individuals, Rectitude is the Supreme Law. It was never designed that the public good, as disjoined from this, as distinct from justice and reverence for all rights, should be comprehended and made our end. Statesmen work in the dark, until the idea of Right towers above expediency or wealth. Woe to that people which would found its prosperity in wrong! It is time that the low maxims of policy, which have ruled for ages, should fall. It is time that public interest should no longer hallow injustice, and fortify government in making the weak their prey.

In this discussion, I have used the phrase, Public or General Good, in its common acceptation, as signifying the safety and prosperity of a state. Why can it not be used in a larger sense? Why can it not be made to comprehend inward and moral, as well as outward good? And why cannot the former be understood to be incomparably the most important element of the public weal? Then, indeed, I should assent to the proposition, that the General Good is the Supreme Law. So construed, it would support the great truths which I have maintained. It would condemn the infliction of wrong on the humblest individual, as a national calamity. It would plead with us to extend to every individual the means of improving his character and lot.

If the remarks under this head be just, it will follow, that the good of the Individual is more important than

Hosted by Google

the outward prosperity of the State. The former is not vague and unsettled, like the latter, and it belongs to a higher order of interests. It consists in the free exertion and expansion of the individual's powers, especially of his higher faculties; in the energy of his intellect, conscience, and good affections; in sound judgment; in the acquisition of truth; in laboring honestly for himself and his family; in loving his Creator, and subjecting his own will to the Divine; in loving his fellow-creatures, and making cheerful sacrifices to their happiness; in friendship; in sensibility to the beautiful, whether in nature or art; in loyalty to his principles; in moral courage; in self-respect; in understanding and asserting his rights; and in the Christian hope of immortality. Such is the good of the Individual; a more sacred, exalted, enduring interest, than any accessions of wealth or power to the State. Let it not be sacrificed to these. He should find, in his connexion with the community, aids to the accomplishment of these purposes of his being, and not be chained and subdued by it to the inferior interests of any fellow-creature.

In all ages the Individual has, in one form or another, been trodden in the dust. In monarchies and aristocracies, he has been sacrificed to One or to the Few; who, regarding government as an heirloom in their families, and thinking of the people as made only to live and die for their glory, have not dreamed that the sovereign power was designed to shield every man, without exception, from wrong. In the ancient Republics, the Glory of the State, especially Conquest, was the end to which the individual was expected to offer himself a victim, and in promoting which, no cruelty was to be declined, no human right revered. He was merged in

Hosted by Google

a great whole, called the Commonwealth, to which his whole nature was to be immolated. It was the glory of the American people, that, in their Declaration of Independence, they took the ground of the indestructible rights of every human being. They declared all men to be essentially equal, and each born to be free. They did not, like the Greek or Roman, assert for themselves a liberty, which they burned to wrest from other states. They spoke in the name of humanity, as the representatives of the rights of the feeblest, as well as mightiest of their race. They published universal, everlasting principles, which are to work out the deliverance of every human being. Such was their glory. Let not the idea of Rights be erased from their children's minds by false ideas of public good. Let not the sacredness of Individual Man be forgotten in the feverish pursuit of property. It is more important that the Individual should respect himself, and be respected by others, than that the wealth of both worlds should be accumulated on our shores. National wealth is not the end of society. It may exist where large classes are depressed and wronged. It may undermine a nation's spirit, institutions, and independence. It can have no value and no sure foundation, until the supremacy of the Rights of the Individual is the first article of a nation's faith, and until reverence for them becomes the spirit of public men.

Perhaps it will be replied to all which has now been said, that there is an argument from experience, which invalidates the doctrines of this section. It may be said, that human rights, notwithstanding what has been said of their sacredness, do and must yield to the exigencies of real life; that there is often a stern necessity in human

Hosted by Google

affairs to which they bow. I may be asked, whether, in the history of nations, circumstances do not occur, in which the rigor of the principles now laid down must be relaxed; whether, in seasons of imminent peril to the state, private rights must not give way. I may be asked, whether the establishment of martial law and a dictator has not sometimes been justified and demanded by public danger; and whether, of course, the rights and liberties of the individual are not held at the discretion of the state. I admit, in reply, that extreme cases may occur, in which the exercise of rights and freedom may be suspended; but suspended only for their ultimate and permanent security. At such times, when the frantic fury of the many, or the usurpations of the few, interrupt the administration of law, and menace property and life, society, threatened with ruin, puts forth instinctively spasmodic efforts for its own preservation. It flies to an irresponsible dictator for its protection. But in these cases, the great idea of Rights predominates amidst their apparent subversion. A power above all laws is conferred, only that the empire of law may be restored. Despotic restraints are imposed, only that liberty may be rescued from ruin. All rights are involved in the safety of the state; and hence, in the cases referred to, the safety of the state becomes the supreme law. The individual is bound for a time to forego his freedom, for the salvation of institutions, without which liberty is but a name. To argue from such sacrifices, that he may be permanently made a slave, is as great an insult to reason as to humanity. It may be added, that sacrifices, which may be demanded for the safety, are not due from the individual to the prosperity

Hosted by Google

of the state. The great end of civil society is to secure rights, not accumulate wealth; and to merge the former in the latter is to turn political union into degradation and a scourge. The community is bound to take the rights of each and all under its guardianship. It must substantiate its claim to universal obedience by redeeming its pledge of universal protection. It must immolate no man to the prosperity of the rest. Its laws should be made for all, its tribunals opened to all. It cannot without guilt abandon any of its members to private oppression, to irresponsible power.

We have thus established the reality and sacredness of human rights; and that slavery is an infraction of these, is too plain to need any labored proof. Slavery violates, not one, but all; and violates them, not incidentally, but necessarily, systematically, from its very nature. In starting with the assumption, that the slave is property, it sweeps away every defence of human rights, and lays them in the dust. Were it necessary, I might enumerate them, and show how all fall before this terrible usurpation; but a few remarks will suffice.

Slavery strips man of the fundamental right to inquire into, consult, and seek his own happiness. His powers belong to another, and for another they must be used. He must form no plans, engage in no enterprises, for bettering his condition. Whatever be his capacities, however equal to great improvements of his lot, he is chained for life, by another's will, to the same unvaried toil. He is forbidden to do, for himself or others, the work for which God stamped him with his own image, and endowed him with his own best gifts. — Again, the slave is stripped of the right to acquire property

Hosted by Google

Being himself owned, his earnings belong to another. He can possess nothing but by favor. That right, on which the developement of men's powers so much depends, the right to make accumulations, to gain exclusive possessions by honest industry, is withheld. "The slave can acquire nothing," says one of the slave codes, "but what must belong to his master;" and however this definition, which moves the indignation of the free, may be mitigated by favor, the spirit of it enters into the very essence of slavery. — Again, the slave is stripped of his right to his wife and children. They belong to another, and may be torn from him, one and all, at any moment, at his master's pleasure. — Again, the slave is stripped of the right to the culture of his rational powers. He is in some cases deprived by law of instruction, which is placed within his reach by the improvements of society and the philanthropy of the age. He is not allowed to toil, that his children may enjoy a better education than himself. The most sacred right of human nature, that of developing his best faculties, is denied. Even should it be granted, it would be conceded as a favor, and might at any moment be withheld by the capricious will of another. — Again, the slave is deprived of the right of self-defence. No injury from a white man is he suffered to repel, nor can he seek redress from the laws of his country. If accumulated insult and wrong provoke him to the slightest retaliation, this effort for self-protection, allowed and commended to others, is a crime, for which he must pay a fearful penalty. — Again, the slave is stripped of the right to be exempted from all harm, except for wrong-doing. He is subjected to the lash by those, whom he has never

Hosted by Google

consented to serve, and whose claim to him as property we have seen to be a usurpation; and this power of punishment, which, if justly claimed, should be exercised with a fearful care, is often delegated to men in whose hands there is a moral certainty of its abuse.

I will add but one more example of the violation of human rights by slavery. The slave virtually suffers the wrong of robbery, though with utter unconsciousness on the part of those who inflict it. It may, indeed, be generally thought, that, as he is suffered to own nothing, he cannot fall, at least, under this kind of violence. But it is not true that he owns nothing. Whatever he may be denied by man, he holds from nature the most valuable property, and that from which all other is derived, I mean his strength. His labor is his own, by the gift of that God, who nerved his arm, and gave him intelligence and conscience to direct the use of it to his own and others' happiness. No possession is so precious as a man's force of body and mind. The exertion of this in labor is the great foundation and source of property in outward things. The worth of articles of traffic is measured by the labor expended in their production. To the great mass of men, in all countries, their strength or labor is their whole fortune. To seize on this would be to rob them of their all. In truth, no robbery is so great, as that to which the slave is habitually subjected. To take by force a man's whole estate, the fruit of years of toil, would, by universal consent, be denounced as a great wrong; but what is this, compared with seizing the man himself, and appropriating to our use the limbs, faculties, strength, and labor, by which all property is won and held fast? The right

Hosted by Google

of property in outward things is as nothing, compared with our right to ourselves. Were the slave-holder stripped of his fortune, he would count the violence slight, compared with what he would suffer, were his person seized and devoted as a chattel to another's use. Let it not be said, that the slave receives an equivalent, that he is fed and clothed, and is not, therefore, robbed. Suppose another to wrest from us a valued possession, and to pay us his own price. Should we not think ourselves robbed? Would not the laws pronounce the invader a robber? Is it consistent with the right of property, that a man should determine the equivalent for what he takes from his neighbour? Especially is it to be hoped, that the equivalent due to the laborer will be scrupulously weighed, when he himself is held as property, and all his earnings are declared to be his master's. So great an infraction of human right is slavery!

In reply to these remarks, it may be said, that the theory and practice of slavery differ; that the rights of the slave are not as wantonly sported with as the claims of the master might lead us to infer; that some of his possessions are sacred; that not a few slave-holders refuse to divorce husband and wife, to sever parent and child; and that, in many cases, the power of punishment is used so reluctantly, as to encourage insolence and insubordination. All this I have no disposition to deny. Indeed, it must be so. It is not in human nature to wink wholly out of sight the rights of a fellow-creature. Degrade him as we may, we cannot altogether forget his claims. In every slave-country, there are, undoubtedly, masters, who desire and purpose to

Hosted by Google

respect these, to the full extent which the nature of the relation will allow. Still, human rights are denied. They lie wholly at another's mercy; and we must have studied history in vain, if we need be told that they will be continually the prey of this absolute power. — The evils, involved in and flowing from the denial and infraction of the rights of the slave, will form the subject of a subsequent chapter.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER III.

EXPLANATIONS.

I have endeavoured to show, in the preceding sections, that slavery is a violation of sacred rights, the infliction of a great wrong. And here a question arises. It may be asked, whether, by this language, I intend to fasten on the slave-holder the charge of peculiar guilt. On this point, great explicitness is a duty. Sympathy with the slave has often degenerated into injustice towards the master. I wish, then, to be understood, that, in ranking slavery among the greatest wrongs, I speak of the injury endured by the slave, and not of the character of the master. These are distinct points. The former does not determine the latter. The wrong is the same to the slave, from whatever motive or spirit it may be inflicted. But this motive or spirit determines wholly the character of him who inflicts it. Because a great injury is done to another, it does not follow, that he who does it is a depraved man; for he may do it unconsciously, and, still more, may do it in the belief that he confers a good. We have learned little of moral science and of human nature, if we do not know, that guilt is to be measured, not by the outward act, but by unfaithfulness to conscience; and that the consciences of men are often darkened by education, and other inau-

Hosted by Google

spicious influences. All men have partial consciences, or want comprehension of some duties. All partake, in a measure, of the errors of the community in which they live. Some are betrayed into moral mistakes by the very force with which conscience acts in regard to some particular duty. As the intellect, in grasping one truth, often loses its hold of others, and, by giving itself up to one idea, falls into exaggeration; so the moral sense, in seizing on a particular exercise of philanthropy, forgets other duties, and will even violate many important precepts, in its passionate eagerness to carry one to perfection. Innumerable illustrations may be given of the liableness of men to moral error. The practice, which strikes one man with horror, may seem to another, who was born and brought up in the midst of it, not only innocent, but meritorious. We must judge others, not by our light, but by their own. We must take their place, and consider what allowance we in their position might justly expect. Our ancestors at the North were concerned in the slave-trade. Some of us can recollect individuals of the colored race, who were torn from Africa, and grew old under our parental roofs. Our ancestors committed a deed now branded as piracy. Were they, therefore, the offscouring of the earth? Were not some of them among the best of their times. The administration of religion, in almost all past ages, has been a violation of the sacred rights of conscience. How many sects have persecuted and shed blood! Were their members, therefore, monsters of depravity? The history of our race is made up of wrongs, many of which were committed without a suspicion of their true character, and many from an urgent sense of duty. A man, born among slaves, accustomed

Hosted by Google

to this relation from his birth, taught its necessity by venerated parents, associating it with all whom he reveres, and too familiar with its evils to see and feel their magnitude, can hardly be expected to look on slavery as it appears to more impartial and distant observers. Let it not be said, that, when new light is offered him, he is criminal in rejecting it. Are we all willing to receive new light? Can we wonder that such a man should be slow to be convinced of the criminality of an abuse sanctioned by prescription, and which has so interwoven itself with all the habits, employments, and economy of life, that he can hardly conceive of the existence of society without this all-pervading element? May he not be true to his convictions of duty in other relations, though he grievously err in this? If, indeed, through cupidity and selfishness, he stifle the monitions of conscience, warp his judgment, and repel the light, he incurs great guilt. If he want virtue to resolve on doing right, though at the loss of every slave, he incurs great guilt. But who of us can look into his heart? To whom are the secret workings there revealed?

Still more. There are masters, who have thrown off the natural prejudices of their position, who see slavery as it is, and who hold the slave chiefly, if not wholly, from disinterested considerations; and these deserve great praise. They deplore and abhor the institution; but believing that partial emancipation, in the present condition of society, would bring unmixed evil on bond and free, they think themselves bound to continue the relation, until it shall be dissolved by comprehensive and systematic measures of the state. There are many of them who would shudder as much as we at reducing a freeman to bondage, but who are appalled by what

Hosted by Google

seem to them the perils and difficulties of liberating multitudes, born and brought up to that condition. There are many, who, nominally holding the slave as property, still hold him for his own good, and for the public order, and would blush to retain him on other grounds. Are such men to be set down among the unprincipled? Am I told, that by these remarks I extenuate slavery? I reply, slavery is still a heavy yoke, and strips man of his dearest rights, be the master's character what it may. Slavery is not less a curse, because long use may have blinded most, who support it, to its evils. Its influence is still blighting, though conscientiously upheld. Absolute monarchy is still a scourge, though among despots there have been good men. It is possible to abhor and oppose bad institutions, and yet to abstain from indiscriminate condemnation of those who cling to them, and even to see in their ranks greater virtue than in ourselves. It is true, and ought to be cheerfully acknowledged, that in the Slave-holding States may be found some of the greatest names of our history, and, what is still more important, bright examples of private virtue and Christian love.

There is, however, there must be, in slave-holding communities, a large class, which cannot be too severely condemned. There are many, we fear, very many, who hold their fellow-creatures in bondage from selfish, base motives. They hold the slave for gain, whether justly or unjustly, they neither ask nor care. They cling to him as property, and have no faith in the principles which will diminish a man's wealth. They hold him, not for his own good, or the safety of the state, but with precisely the same views, with which they hold a labor-

Hosted by Google

ing horse, that is, for the profit which they can wring from him. They will not hear a word of his wrongs; for, wronged or not, they will not let him go. He is their property, and they mean not to be poor for righteousness' sake. Such a class there undoubtedly is among slave-holders; how large, their own consciences must determine. We are sure of it; for, under such circumstances, human nature will and must come to this mournful result. Now, to men of this spirit, the explanations we have made do in no degree apply. Such men ought to tremble before the rebukes of outraged humanity and indignant virtue. Slavery upheld for gain, is a great crime. He, who has nothing to urge against emancipation, but that it will make him poorer, is bound to Immediate Emancipation. He has no excuse for wresting from his brethren their rights. The plea of benefit to the slave and the state avails him nothing. He extorts, by the lash, that labor to which he has no claim, through a base selfishness. Every morsel of food, thus forced from the injured, ought to be bitterer than gall. His gold is cankered. The sweat of the slave taints the luxuries for which it streams. Better were it for the selfish wrong-doer, of whom I speak, to live as the slave, to clothe himself in the slave's raiment, to eat the slave's coarse food, to till his fields with his own hands, than to pamper himself by day, and pillow his head on down at night, at the cost of a wantonly injured fellow-creature. No fellow-creature can be so injured without taking terrible vengeance. He is terribly avenged even now. The blight which falls on the soul of the wrong-doer, the desolation of his moral nature, is a more terrible calamity than he inflicts. In deadening his moral feelings, he dies to the proper happiness of

Hosted by Google

a man. In hardening his heart against his fellow-creatures, he sears it to all true joy. In shutting his ear against the voice of justice, he shuts out all the harmonies of the universe, and turns the voice of God within him into rebuke. He may prosper, indeed, and hold faster the slave by whom he prospers; but he rivets heavier and more ignominious chains on his own soul than he lays on others. No punishment is so terrible as prosperous guilt. No fiend, exhausting on us all his power of torture, is so fearful as an oppressed fellow-creature. The cry of the oppressed, unheard on earth, is heard in heaven. God is just, and if justice reign, then the unjust must terribly suffer. Then no being can profit by evil-doing. Then all the laws of the universe are ordinances against guilt. Then every enjoyment gained by wrong-doing will be turned into a curse. No laws of nature are so irrepealable as that law which binds guilt and misery. God is just. Then all the defences, which the oppressor rears against the consequences of wrong-doing, are vain, as vain as would be his strivings to arrest by his single arm the ocean or whirlwind. He may disarm the slave. Can he disarm that slave's Creator? He can crush the spirit of insurrection in a fellow-being. Can he crush the awful spirit of justice and retribution in the Almighty? He can still the murmur of discontent in his victim. Can he silence that voice which speaks in thunder, and is to break the sleep of the grave? Can he always still the reproving, avenging voice in his own breast?

I know it will be said, "You would make us poor." Be poor, then, and thank God for your honest poverty. Better be poor than unjust. Better beg than steal. Better live in an alms-house, better die, than trample on

Hosted by Google

a fellow-creature and reduce him to a brute, for selfish gratification. What! Have we yet to learn, that "it profits us nothing to gain the whole world, and lose our souls"?

Let it not be replied, in scorn, that we of the North, notorious for love of money, and given to selfish calculation, are not the people to call others to resign their wealth. I have no desire to shield the North; though I might say, with truth, that a community, more generally controlled by the principles of morality and religion, cannot be found. We have, without doubt, a great multitude, who, were they slave-holders, would sooner die than relax their iron grasp, than yield their property in men to justice and the commands of God. We have those who would fight against abolition, if by this measure the profit of their intercourse with the South should be materially impaired. The present excitement among us is, in part, the working of mercenary principles. But because the North joins hands with the South, shall iniquity go unpunished or unrebuked? Can the league of the wicked, the revolt of worlds, repeal the everlasting law of heaven and earth? Has God's throne fallen before Mammon's? Must duty find no voice, no organ, because corruption is universally diffused? Is not this a fresh motive to solemn warning, that, everywhere, Northward and Southward, the rights of human beings are held so cheap, in comparison with worldly gain?

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVILS OF SLAVERY.

The subject of this section is painful and repulsive. We must not, however, turn away from the contemplation of human sufferings and guilt. Evil is permitted by the Creator, that we should strive against it, in faith, and hope, and charity. We must never quail before it because of its extent and duration, never feel as if its power were greater than that of goodness. It is meant to call forth deep sympathy with human nature, and unwearied sacrifices for human redemption. One great part of the mission of every man on earth is to contend with evil in some of its forms; and there are some evils so dependent on opinion, that every man, in judging and reproving them faithfully, does something towards their removal. Let us not, then, shrink from the contemplation of human sufferings. Even sympathy, if we have nothing more to offer, is a tribute acceptable to the Universal Father. — On this topic, exaggeration should be conscientiously shunned; and, at the same time, humanity requires that the whole truth should be honestly spoken.

In treating of the evils of slavery, I, of course, speak of its general, not universal effects, of its natural tendencies, not unfailing results. There are the same

Hosted by Google

natural differences among the bond as the free, and there is a great diversity in the circumstances in which they are placed. The house-slave, selected for ability and faithfulness, placed amidst the habits, accommodations, and improvements of civilized life, admitted to a degree of confidence and familiarity, and requiting these privileges with attachment, is almost necessarily more enlightened and respectable than the field-slave, who is confined to monotonous toils, and to the society and influences of beings as degraded as himself. The mechanics in this class are sensibly benefited by occupations which give a higher action to the mind. Among the bond, as the free, will be found those to whom nature seems partial, and who are carried almost instinctively towards what is good. I speak of the natural, general influences of slavery. Here, as everywhere else, there are exceptions to the rule, and exceptions which multiply with the moral improvements of the community in which the slave is found. But these do not determine the general character of the institution. It has general tendencies, founded in its very nature, and which predominate vastly wherever it exists. These tendencies it is my present purpose to unfold.

1. The first rank among the evils of slavery must be given to its Moral influence. This is throughout debasing. Common language teaches this. We can say nothing more insulting of another, than that he is slavish. To possess the spirit of a slave is to have sunk to the lowest depths. We can apply to slavery no worse name than its own. Men have always shrunk instinctively from this state, as the most degraded. No punishment, save death, has been more dreaded, and to avoid it death has often been endured.

Hosted by Google

In expressing the moral influence of slavery, the first and most obvious remark is, that it destroys the proper consciousness and spirit of a Man. The slave, regarded and treated as property, bought and sold like a brute, denied the rights of humanity, unprotected against insult, made a tool, and systematically subdued, that he may be a manageable, useful tool, how can he help regarding himself as fallen below his race? How must his spirit be crushed! How can he respect himself? He becomes bowed to servility. This word, borrowed from his condition, expresses the ruin wrought by slavery within him. The idea, that he was made for his own virtue and happiness, scarcely dawns on his mind. To be an instrument of the physical, material good of another, whose will is his highest law, he is taught to regard as the great purpose of his being. Here lies the evil of slavery. Its whips, imprisonments, and even the horrors of the middle passage from Africa to America, these are not to be named, in comparison with this extinction of the proper consciousness of a human being, with the degradation of a man into a brute.

It may be said, that the slave is used to his yoke; that his sensibilities are blunted; that he receives, without a pang or a thought, the treatment which would sting other men to madness. And to what does this apology amount? It virtually declares, that slavery has done its perfect work, has quenched the spirit of humanity, that the Man is dead within the slave. Is slavery, therefore, no wrong? It is not, however, true, that this work of debasement is ever so effectually done as to extinguish all feeling. Man is too great a creature to be wholly ruined by man. When he seems dead,

Hosted by Google

he only sleeps. There are occasionally some sullen murmurs in the calm of slavery, showing that life still beats in the soul, that the idea of Rights cannot be wholly effaced from the human being.

It would be too painful, and it is not needed, to detail the processes by which the spirit is broken in slavery. I refer to one only, the selling of slaves. The practice of exposing fellow-creatures for sale, of having markets for men as for cattle, of examining the limbs and muscles of a man and a woman as of a brute, of putting human beings under the hammer of an auctioneer, and delivering them, like any other articles of merchandise, to the highest bidder, all this is such an insult to our common nature, and so infinitely degrading to the poor victim, that it is hard to conceive of its existence, except in a barbarous country.

That slavery should be most unpropitious to the slave as a moral being will be farther apparent, if we consider that his condition is throughout a Wrong, and that consequently it must tend to unsettle all his notions of duty. The violation of his own rights, to which he is inured from birth, must throw confusion over his ideas of all human rights. He cannot comprehend them; or, if he does, how can he respect them, seeing them, as he does, perpetually trampled on in his own person? The injury to the character, from living in an atmosphere of wrong, we can all understand. To live in a state of society, of which injustice is the chief and all-pervading element, is too severe a trial for human nature, especially when no means are used to counteract its influence.

Accordingly, the most common distinctions of morality are faintly apprehended by the slave. Respect

Hosted by Google

for property, that fundamental law of civil society, can hardly be instilled into him. His dishonesty is proverbial. Theft from his master passes with him for no crime. A system of force is generally found to drive to fraud. How necessarily will this be the result of a relation in which force is used to extort from a man his labor, his natural property, without any attempt to win his consent! Can we wonder, that the uneducated conscience of the man who is daily wronged should allow him in reprisals to the extent of his power? Thus the primary social virtue, justice, is undermined in the slave.

That the slave should yield himself to intemperance, licentiousness, and, in general, to sensual excess, we must also expect. Doomed to live for the physical indulgences of others, unused to any pleasures but those of sense, stripped of self-respect, and having nothing to gain in life, how can he be expected to govern himself? How naturally, I had almost said necessarily, does he become the creature of sensation, of passion, of the present moment! What aid does the future give him in withstanding desire? That better condition, for which other men postpone the cravings of appetite, never opens before him. The sense of character, the power of opinion, another restraint on the free, can do little or nothing to rescue so abject a class from excess and debasement. In truth, power over himself is the last virtue we should expect in the slave, when we think of him as subjected to absolute power, and made to move passively from the impulse of a foreign will. He is trained to cowardice, and cowardice links itself naturally with low vices. Idleness, to his apprehension, is paradise, for he works without hope of reward. Thus slav-

Hosted by Google

ery robs him of moral force, and prepares him to fall a prey to appetite and passion.

That the slave finds in his condition little nutriment for the social virtues we shall easily understand, if we consider, that his chief relations are to an absolute master, and to the companions of his degrading bondage; that is, to a being who wrongs him, and to associates whom he cannot honor, whom he sees debased. His dependence on his owner loosens his ties to all other beings. He has no country to love, no family to call his own, no objects of public utility to espouse, no impulse to generous exertion. The relations, dependences, and responsibilities, by which Providence forms the soul to a deep, disinterested love, are almost struck out of his lot. An arbitrary rule, a foreign, irresistible will, taking him out of his own hands, and placing him beyond the natural influences of society, extinguishes in a great degree the sense of what is due to himself, and to the human family around him.

The effects of slavery on the character are so various, that this part of the discussion might be greatly extended; but I will touch only on one topic. Let us turn, for a moment, to the great Motive by which the slave is made to labor. Labor, in one form or another, is appointed by God for man's improvement and happiness, and absorbs the chief part of human life, so that the Motive which excites to it has immense influence on character. It determines very much, whether life shall serve or fail of its end. The man, who works from honorable motives, from domestic affections, from desire of a condition which will open to him greater happiness and usefulness, finds in labor an exercise and invigoration of virtue. The day-laborer, who earns,

Hosted by Google

with horny hand and the sweat of his face, coarse food for a wife and children whom he loves, is raised, by this generous motive, to true dignity; and, though wanting the refinements of life, is a nobler being than those who think themselves absolved by wealth from serving others. Now the slave's labor brings no dignity, is an exercise of no virtue, but throughout a degradation; so that one of God's chief provisions for human improvement becomes a curse. The motive from which he acts debases him. It is the whip. It is corporal punishment. It is physical pain inflicted by a fellow-creature. Undoubtedly labor is mitigated to the slave, as to all men, by habit. But this is not the motive. Take away the whip, and he would be idle. His labor brings no new comforts to wife or child. The motive which spurs him is one, by which it is base to be swayed. Stripes are, indeed, resorted to by civil government, when no other consideration will deter from crime; but he, who is deterred from wrong-doing by the whipping-post, is among the most fallen of his race. To work in sight of the whip, under menace of blows, is to be exposed to perpetual insult and degrading influences. Every motion of the limbs, which such a menace urges, is a wound to the soul. How hard must it be for a man, who lives under the lash, to respect himself! When this motive is substituted for all the nobler ones which God ordains, is it not almost necessarily death to the better and higher sentiments of our nature? It is the part of a man to despise pain in comparison with disgrace, to meet it fearlessly in well-doing, to perform the work of life from other impulses. It is the part of a brute to be governed by the whip. Even the brute is seen to act from more generous incitements. The

Hosted by Google

horse of a noble breed will not endure the lash. Shall we sink man below the horse ?

Let it not be said, that blows are seldom inflicted. Be it so. We are glad to know it. But this is not the point. The complaint now urged is not of the amount of the pain inflicted, but of its influence on the character, when made the great motive to human labor. It is not the endurance, but the dread of the whip, it is the substitution of this for natural and honorable motives to action, which we abhor and condemn. It matters not, whether few or many are whipped. A blow given to a single slave is a stripe on the souls of all who see or hear it. It makes all abject, servile. It is not the wound given to the flesh, of which we now complain. Scar the back, and you have done nothing, compared with the wrong done to the soul. You have either stung that soul with infernal passions, with thirst for revenge; or, what perhaps is more discouraging, you have broken and brutalized it. The human spirit has perished under your hands, as far as it can be destroyed by human force.

I know it is sometimes said, in reply to these remarks, that all men, as well as slaves, act from necessity; that we have masters in hunger and thirst; that no man loves labor for itself; that the pains, which are inflicted on us by the laws of nature, the elements and seasons, are so many lashes driving us to our daily task. Be it so. Still the two cases are essentially different. The necessity laid on us by natural wants is most kindly in its purpose. It is meant to awaken all our faculties, to give full play to body and mind, and thus to give us a new consciousness of the powers derived to us from God. We are, indeed, subjected to a stern nature;

Hosted by Google

we are placed amidst warring elements, scorching heat, withering cold, storms, blights, sickness, death. And what is the design? To call forth our powers, to lay on us great duties, to make us nobler beings. We are placed in the midst of a warring nature, not to yield to it, not to be its slaves, but to conquer it, to make it the monument of our skill and strength, to arm ourselves with its elements, its heat, winds, vapors, and mineral treasures, to find, in its painful changes, occasions and incitements to invention, courage, endurance, mutual and endearing dependences, and religious trust. The developement of human nature, in all its powers and affections, is the end of that hard necessity which is laid on us by nature. Is this one and the same thing with the whip laid on the slave? Still more; it is the design of nature, that, by energy, skill, and self-denial, we should so far anticipate our wants, or accumulate supplies, as to be able to diminish the toil of the hands, and to mix with it more intellectual and liberal occupations. Nature does not lay on us an unchangeable task, but one which we may all lighten by honest, self-denying industry. Thus she invites us to throw off her yoke, and to make her our servant. Is this the invitation which the master gives his slaves? Is it his aim to awaken the powers of those on whom he lays his burdens, and to give them increasing mastery over himself? Is it not his aim to curb their wills, break their spirits, and shut them up for ever in the same narrow and degrading work? Oh, let not nature be profaned, let not her parental rule be blasphemed, by comparing with her the slave-holder!

2. Having considered the moral influence of slavery.

Hosted by Google

I proceed to consider its Intellectual influence, another great topic. God gave us intellectual power, that it should be cultivated; and a system which degrades it, and can only be upheld by its depression, opposes one of his most benevolent designs. Reason is God's image in man, and the capacity of acquiring truth is among his best aspirations. To call forth the intellect is a principal purpose of the circumstances in which we are placed, of the child's connection with the parent, and of the necessity laid on him in maturer life to provide for himself and others. The education of the intellect is not confined to youth; but the various experience of later years does vastly more than books and colleges to ripen and invigorate the faculties.

Now the whole lot of the slave is fitted to keep his mind in childhood and bondage. Though living in a land of light, few beams find their way to his benighted understanding. No parent feels the duty of instructing him. No teacher is provided for him, but the Driver, who breaks him, almost in childhood, to the servile tasks which are to fill up his life. No book is opened to his youthful curiosity. As he advances in years, no new excitements supply the place of teachers. He is not cast on himself, made to depend on his own energies. No stirring prizes in life awaken his dormant faculties. Fed and clothed by others like a child, directed in every step, doomed for life to a monotonous round of labor, he lives and dies without a spring to his powers, often brutally unconscious of his spiritual nature. Nor is this all. When benevolence would approach him with instruction, it is repelled. He is not allowed to be taught. The light is jealously barred out. The voice, which would speak to him as a man, is put to silence. He

Hosted by Google

must not even be enabled to read the Word of God. His immortal spirit is systematically crushed.

It is said, I know, that the ignorance of the slave is necessary to the security of the master, and the quiet of the state; and this is said truly. Slavery and knowledge cannot live together. To enlighten the slave is to break his chain. To make him harmless, he must be kept blind. He cannot be left to read, in an enlightened age, without endangering his master; for what can he read, which will not give, at least, some hint of his wrongs? Should his eye chance to fall on the "Declaration of Independence," how would the truth glare on him, that "All men are born free and equal!" All knowledge furnishes arguments against slavery. From every subject, light would break forth to reveal his inalienable and outraged rights. The very exercise of his intellect would give him the consciousness of being made for something more than a slave. I agree to the necessity laid on his master to keep him in darkness. And what stronger argument against slavery can be conceived? It compels the master to degrade systematically the mind of the slave; to war against human intelligence; to resist that improvement which is the end of the Creator. "Woe to him that taketh away the key of knowledge!" To kill the body is a great crime. The spirit we cannot kill, but we can bury it in death-like lethargy; and is this a light crime in the sight of its Maker?

Let it not be said, that almost everywhere the laboring classes are doomed to ignorance, deprived of the means of instruction. The intellectual advantages of the laboring freeman, who is intrusted with the care of himself, raise him far above the slave; and, accordingly,

Hosted by Google

superior minds are constantly seen to issue from the less educated classes. Besides, in free communities, philanthropy is not forbidden to labor for the improvement of the ignorant. The obligation of the prosperous and instructed to elevate their less favored brethren is taught, and not taught in vain. Benevolence is making perpetual encroachments on the domain of ignorance and crime. In communities, on the other hand, cursed with slavery, half the population, sometimes more, are given up, intentionally and systematically, to hopeless ignorance. To raise this mass to intelligence and self-government is a crime. The sentence of perpetual degradation is passed on a large portion of the human race. In this view, how great the ill-desert of slavery!

3. I proceed, now, to the Domestic influences of slavery; and here we must look for a dark picture. Slavery virtually dissolves the domestic relations. It ruptures the most sacred ties on earth. It violates home. It lacerates the best affections. The domestic relations precede, and, in our present existence, are worth more than all our other social ties. They give the first throb to the heart, and unseal the deep fountains of its love. Home is the chief school of human virtue. Its responsibilities, joys, sorrows, smiles, tears, hopes, and solicitudes, form the chief interests of human life. Go where a man may, home is the centre to which his heart turns. The thought of his home nerves his arm and lightens his toil. For that his heart yearns, when he is far off. There he garners up his best treasures. God has ordained for all men alike the highest earthly happiness, in providing for all the sanctuary of home. But the slave's home does not merit

Hosted by Google

the name. To him it is no sanctuary. It is open to violation, insult, outrage. His children belong to another, are provided for by another, are disposed of by another. The most precious burden with which the heart can be charged, the happiness of his child, he must not bear. He lives not for his family, but for a stranger. He cannot improve their lot. His wife and daughter he cannot shield from insult. They may be torn from him at another's pleasure, sold as beasts of burden, sent he knows not whither, sent where he cannot reach them, or even interchange inquiries and messages of love. To the slave marriage has no sanctity. It may be dissolved in a moment at another's will. His wife, son, and daughter may be lashed before his eyes, and not a finger must be lifted in their defence. He sees the scar of the lash on his wife and child. Thus the slave's home is desecrated. Thus the tenderest relations, intended by God equally for all, and intended to be the chief springs of happiness and virtue, are sported with wantonly and cruelly. What outrage so great as to enter a man's house, and tear from his side the beings whom God has bound to him by the holiest ties? Every man can make the case his own. Every mother can bring it home to her own heart.

And let it not be said, that the slave has not the sensibilities of other men. Nature is too strong even for slavery to conquer. Even the brute has the yearnings of parental love. But suppose that the conjugal and parental ties of the slave may be severed without a pang. What a curse must be slavery, if it can so blight the heart with more than brutal insensibility, if it can sink the human mother below the Polar she-bear, which "howls and dies for her sundered cub!" But it does

Hosted by Google

not and cannot turn the slave to stone. It leaves, at least, feeling enough to make these domestic wrongs occasions of frequent and deep suffering. Still it must do much to quench the natural affections. Can the wife, who has been brought up under influences most unfriendly to female purity and honor, who is exposed to the whip, who may be torn away at her master's will, and whose support and protection are not committed to a husband's faithfulness, can such a wife, if the name may be given her, be loved and honored as a woman should be? Or can the love, which should bind together man and his offspring, be expected under an institution which subverts, in a great degree, filial dependence and parental authority and care? Slavery withers the affections and happiness of home at their very root, by tainting female purity. Woman, brought up in degradation, placed under another's power and at another's disposal, and never taught to look forward to the happiness of an inviolate, honorable marriage, can hardly possess the feelings and virtues of her sex. A blight falls on her in her early years. Those who have daughters can comprehend her lot. In truth, licentiousness among bond and free is the natural issue of all-polluting slavery. Domestic happiness perishes under its touch, both among bond and free.

How wonderful is it, that, in civilized countries, men can be so steeled by habit as to invade without remorse the peace, purity, and sacred relations of domestic life, as to put asunder those whom God has joined together, as to break up households by processes more painful than death! And this is done for pecuniary profit! What! Can men, having human feeling, grow rich by the desolation of families? We hear of some of the

Hosted by Google

Southern States enriching themselves by breeding slaves for sale. Of all the licensed occupations of society this is the most detestable. What! Grow men like cattle! Rear human families, like herds of swine, and then scatter them to the four winds for gain! Among the imprecations uttered by man on man, is there one more fearful, more ominous, than the sighing of the mother bereft of her child by unfeeling cupidity? If blood cry to God, surely that sigh will be heard in heaven.

Let it not be said, that members of families are often separated in all conditions of life. Yes, but separated under the influence of love. The husband leaves wife and children, that he may provide for their support, and carries them with him in his heart and hopes. The sailor, in his lonely night-watch, looks homeward, and well-known voices come to him amidst the roar of the waves. The parent sends away his children, but sends them to prosper, and to press them again to his heart with a joy enhanced by separation. Are such the separations which slavery makes? And can he, who has scattered other families, ask God to bless his own?

4. I proceed to another important view of the evils of slavery. Slavery produces and gives license to Cruelty. By this it is not meant, that cruelty is the universal, habitual, unfailing result. Thanks to God, Christianity has not entered the world in vain. Where it has not cast down, it has mitigated bad institutions. Slavery in this country differs widely from that of ancient times, and from that which the Spaniards imposed on the aboriginals of South America. There is here an increasing disposition to multiply the comforts of the slaves, and in this let us rejoice. At the same time,

Hosted by Google

we must remember, that, under the light of the present day, and in a country where Christianity and the rights of men are understood, a diminished severity may contain more guilt than the ferocity of darker ages. Cruelty in its lighter forms is now a greater crime than the atrocious usages of antiquity at which we shudder. "The times of that ignorance God winked at, but *now* he calleth men everywhere to repent." It should also be considered, that the slightest cruelty to the slave is an aggravated wrong, because he is unjustly held in bondage, unjustly held as property. We condemn the man who enforces harshly a righteous claim. What, then, ought we to think of lashing and scarring fellow-creatures, for the purpose of upholding an unrighteous, usurped power, of extorting labor which is not our due?

I have said, that cruelty is not the habit of the Slave States of this country. Still, that it is frequent we cannot doubt. Reports, which harrow up our souls, come to us from that quarter; and we know that they must be essentially correct, because it is impossible that a large part, perhaps the majority, of the population of a country can be broken to passive, unlimited submission, without examples of terrible severity.

Let it not be said, as is sometimes done, that cruel deeds are perpetrated everywhere else, as well as in slave-countries. Be it so; but in all civilized nations unscourged by slavery, a principal object of legislation is to protect every man from cruelty, and to bring every man to punishment, who wantonly tortures or wounds another; whilst slavery plucks off restraint from the ferocious, or leaves them to satiate their rage with impunity.—Let it not be said, that these barbarities are regarded nowhere with more horror than at the South.

Hosted by Google

Be it so. They are abhorred, but allowed. The power of individuals to lacerate their fellow-creatures is given to them by the community. The community abhors the abuse, but confers the power which will certainly be abused, and thus strips itself of all defence before the bar of Almighty Justice. It must answer for the crimes which are shielded by its laws. — Let it not be said, that these cruelties are checked by the private interest of the slave-holder. Does regard to private interest save from brutal treatment the draught-horse in our streets? And may not a vast amount of suffering be inflicted, which will not put in peril the life or strength of the slave?

To substantiate the charge of cruelty, I shall not, as I have said, have recourse to current reports, however well established. I am willing to dismiss them all as false. I stand on other ground. Reports may lie, but our daily experience of human nature cannot lie. I summon no witnesses, or rather I appeal to a witness everywhere present, a witness in every heart. Who, that has watched his own heart, or observed others, does not feel that man is not fit to be trusted with absolute, irresponsible power over man? It must be abused. The selfish passions and pride of our nature will as surely abuse it, as the storm will ravage, or the ocean swell and roar under the whirlwind. A being, so ignorant, so headstrong, so passionate, as man, ought not to be trusted with this terrible dominion. He ought not to desire it. He ought to dread it. He ought to cast it from him, as most perilous to himself and others.

Absolute power was not meant for man. There is, indeed, an exception to this rule. There is one case, in which God puts a human being wholly defenceless

Hosted by Google

into another's hands. I refer to the child, who is wholly subjected to the parent's will. But observe how carefully, I might almost say anxiously, God has provided against the abuse of this power. He has raised up for the child in the heart of the parent, a guardian, whom the mightiest on earth cannot resist. He has fitted the parent for this trust, by teaching him to love his offspring better than himself. No eloquence on earth is so subduing as the moaning of the infant when in pain. No reward is sweeter than that infant's smile. We say, God has put the infant into the parent's hands. Might we not more truly say, that he has put the parent into the child's power? That little being sends forth his father to toil, and makes the mother watch over him by day, and fix on him her sleepless eyes by night. No tyrant lays such a yoke. Thus God has fenced and secured from abuse the power of the parent; and yet even the parent has been known, in a moment of passion, to be cruel to his child. Is man, then, to be trusted with absolute power over a fellow-creature, who, instead of being commended by nature to his tenderest love, belongs to a despised race, is regarded as property, is made the passive instrument of his gratification and gain? I ask no documents to prove the abuses of this power, nor do I care what is said to disprove them. Millions may rise up and tell me that the slave suffers little from cruelty. I know too much of human nature, human history, human passion, to believe them. I acquit slave-holders of all peculiar depravity. I judge them by myself. I say, that absolute power always corrupts human nature more or less. I say, that extraordinary, almost miraculous self-control is necessary to secure the slave-holder from provocation and passion;

Hosted by Google

and is self-control the virtue which, above all others, grows up amidst the possession of irresponsible dominion? Even when the slave-holder honestly acquits himself of cruelty, he may be criminal. His own consciousness is to be distrusted. Having begun with wronging the slave, with wresting from him sacred rights, he may be expected to multiply wrongs, without thought. The degraded state of the slave may induce in the master a mode of treatment essentially inhuman and insulting, but which he never dreams to be cruel. The influence of slavery in indurating the moral feeling and blinding men to wrong, is one of its worst evils.

But suppose the master to be ever so humane. Still, he is not always watching over his slave. He has his pleasures to attend to. He is often absent. His terrible power must be delegated. And to whom is it delegated? To men prepared to govern others, by having learned to govern themselves? To men having a deep interest in the slaves? To wise men, instructed in human nature? To Christians, trained to purity and love? Who does not know, that the office of Overseer is among the last which an enlightened, philanthropic, self-respecting man would choose? Who does not know, how often the overseer pollutes the plantation by his licentiousness, as well as scourges it by his severity? In the hands of such a man, the lash is placed. To such a man is committed the most fearful trust on earth! For his cruelties, the master must answer, as truly as if they were his own. Nor is this all. The master does more than delegate his power to the overseer. How often does he part with it wholly to the slave-dealer! And has he weighed the responsibility of such a transfer? Does he not know, that, in selling his

Hosted by Google

slaves into merciless hands, he is merciless himself, and must give an account to God for every barbarity of which they become the victims? The notorious cruelty of the slave-dealers, can be no false report, for it belongs to their vocation. These are the men, who throng and defile our Seat of Government, whose slave-markets and slave-dungeons turn to mockery the language of freedom in the halls of Congress, and who make us justly the by-word and the scorn of the nations. Is there no cruelty in putting slaves under the bloody lash of the slave-dealers, to be driven like herds of cattle to distant regions, and there to pass into the hands of strangers, without a pledge of their finding justice or mercy? What heart, not seared by custom, would not recoil from such barbarity?

It has been seen, that I do not ground my argument at all on cases of excessive cruelty. I should attach less importance to these than do most persons, even were they more frequent. They form a very, very small amount of suffering, compared with what is inflicted by abuses of power too minute for notice. Blows, insults, privations, which make no noise, and leave no scar, are incomparably more destructive of happiness than a few brutal violences, which move general indignation. A weak, despised being, having no means of defence or redress, living in a community armed against his rights, regarded as property, and as bound to entire, unresisting compliance with another's will, if not subjected to inflictions of ferocious cruelty, is yet exposed to less striking and shocking forms of cruelty, the amount of which must be a fearful mass of suffering.

But could it be proved, that there are no cruelties in slave-countries, we ought not then to be more recon-

Hosted by Google

ciled to slavery than we now are. For what would this show? That cruelty is not needed. And why not needed? Because the slave is entirely subdued to his lot. No man will be wholly unresisting in bondage, but he who is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of a slave. If the colored race never need punishment, it is because the feelings of men are dead within them, because they have no consciousness of rights, because they are cowards, without respect for themselves, and without confidence in the sharers of their degraded lot. The quiet of slavery is like that which the Roman legions left in ancient Britain, the stillness of death. Why were the Romans accustomed to work their slaves in chains by day, and confine them in dungeons by night? Not because they loved cruelty for its own sake; but because their slaves were stung with a consciousness of degradation, because they brought from the forests of Dacia some rude ideas of human dignity, or from civilized countries some experience of social improvements, which naturally issued in violence and exasperation. They needed cruelty, for their own wills were not broken to another's, and the spirit of freemen was not wholly gone. The slave *must* meet cruel treatment either inwardly or outwardly. Either the soul or the body must receive the blow. Either the flesh must be tortured, or the spirit be struck down. Dreadful alternative to which slavery is reduced!

5. I proceed to another view of the evils of slavery. I refer to its influence on the Master. This topic cannot, perhaps, be so handled as to avoid giving offence; but without it an imperfect view of the subject would be given. I will pass over many views I will say noth-

Hosted by Google

ing of the tendency of slavery to unsettle the ideas of Right in the slave-holder, to impair his convictions of Justice and Benevolence; or of its tendency to associate with labor ideas of degradation, and to recommend idleness as an honorable exemption. I will confine myself to two considerations.

The first is, that slavery, above all other influences, nourishes the passion for power and its kindred vices. There is no passion which needs a stronger curb. Men's worst crimes have sprung from the desire of being masters, of bending others to their yoke. And the natural tendency of bringing others into subjection to our absolute will, is to quicken into fearful activity the imperious, haughty, proud, self-seeking propensities of our nature. Man cannot, without imminent peril to his virtue, own a fellow-creature, or use the word of absolute command to his brethren. God never delegated this power. It is a usurpation of the Divine dominion, and its natural influence is to produce a spirit of superiority to Divine as well as to human laws.

Undoubtedly this tendency is in a measure counteracted by the spirit of the age and the genius of Christianity, and in conscientious individuals it may be wholly overcome; but we see its fruits in the corruptions of moral sentiment which prevail among slave-holders. A quick resentment of whatever is thought to encroach on personal dignity, a trembling jealousy of reputation, vehemence of the vindictive passions, and contempt of all laws, human and divine, in retaliating injury, — these take rank among the virtues of men whose self-estimation has been fed by the possession of absolute power.

Of consequence, the direct tendency of slavery is to

Hosted by Google

annihilate the control of Christianity. Humility is by eminence the spirit of Christianity. No vice was so severely rebuked by our Lord, as the passion for ruling over others. A deference towards all human beings as our brethren, a benevolence which disposes us to serve rather than to reign, to concede our own rather than to encroach on others' rights, to forgive, not avenge wrongs, to govern our own spirits, instead of breaking the spirit of an inferior or foe,—this is Christianity; a religion too high and pure to be understood and obeyed anywhere as it should be, but which meets singular hostility in the habits of mind generated by slavery.

The slave-holder, indeed, values himself on his loftiness of spirit. He has a consciousness of dignity, which imposes on himself and others. But truth cannot stoop to this lofty mien. Truth, moral Christian truth, condemns it, and condemns those who bow to it. Self-respect, founded on a consciousness of our moral nature and immortal destiny, is, indeed, a noble principle; but this sentiment includes, as a part of itself, respect for all who partake our nature. A consciousness of dignity, founded on the subjection of others to our absolute will, is inhuman and unjust. It is time that the teachings of Christ were understood. In proportion as a man acquires a lofty bearing from the habit of command over wronged and depressed fellow-creatures, so far he casts away true honor, so far he has fallen in the sight of God and Virtue.

I approach a more delicate subject, and one on which I shall not enlarge. To own the persons of others, to hold females in slavery, is necessarily fatal to the purity of a people. That unprotected females, stripped by their degraded condition of woman's self-respect, should

Hosted by Google

be used to minister to other passions in men than the love of gain, is next to inevitable. Accordingly, in such a community, the reins are given to youthful licentiousness. Youth, everywhere in peril, is in these circumstances urged to vice with a terrible power. And the evil cannot stop at youth. Early licentiousness is fruitful of crime in mature life. How far the obligation to conjugal fidelity, the sacredness of domestic ties, will be revered amidst such habits, such temptations, such facilities to vice, as are involved in slavery, needs no exposition. So sure and terrible is retribution even in this life! Domestic happiness is not blighted in the slave's hut alone. The master's infidelity sheds a blight over his own domestic affections and joys. Home, without purity and constancy, is spoiled of its holiest charm and most blessed influences. I need not say, after the preceding explanations, that this corruption is far from being universal. Still, a slave-country reeks with licentiousness. It is tainted with a deadlier pestilence than the plague.

But the worst is not told. As a consequence of criminal connections, many a master has children born into slavery. Of these, most, I presume, receive protection, perhaps indulgence, during the life of the fathers; but at their death, not a few are left to the chances of a cruel bondage. These cases must have increased, since the difficulties of emancipation have been multiplied. Still more; it is to be feared that there are cases, in which the master puts his own children under the whip of the overseer, or else sells them to undergo the miseries of bondage among strangers. I should rejoice to learn that my impressions on this point are false. If they be true, then our own country, calling

Hosted by Google

itself enlightened and Christian, is defiled with one of the greatest enormities on earth. We send missionaries to heathen lands. Among the pollutions of heathenism I know nothing worse than this. The heathen, who feasts on his country's foe, may hold up his head by the side of the Christian, who sells his child for gain, sells him to be a slave. God forbid that I should charge this crime on a people! But however rarely it may occur, it is a fruit of slavery, an exercise of power belonging to slavery, and no laws restrain or punish it. Such are the evils which spring naturally from the licentiousness generated by slavery.

6. I cannot leave the subject of the evils of slavery, without saying a word of its Political influence. Under this head, I shall not engage in discussions which belong to the economist. I shall not repeat, what has been often proved, that slave-labor is less productive than free; nor shall I show, how the ability of a community to unfold its resources in peace, and to defend itself in war, must be impaired, by degrading the laboring population to a state, which takes from them motives to toil, and renders them objects of suspicion or dread. I wish only to speak of the influence of slavery on Free Institutions. This influence, we are gravely told, is favorable, and therefore I am bound to give it a brief notice. Political liberty is said to find strength and security in domestic servitude. Strange mode, indeed, of ensuring freedom to ourselves, to violate it in the persons of others! Among the new lights of the age, the most wonderful discovery is, that to spoil others of their rights is the way to assert the sacredness of our own.

And how is slavery proved to support free institu-

Hosted by Google

tions? Slave-holding, we are told, infuses an indomitable spirit, and this is a pledge against tyranny. But do we not know that Asia and Africa, slave-holding countries from the earliest date of history, have been paralyzed for ages and robbed of all manly force by despotism? In the feudal ages, the baron, surrounded by his serfs, had undoubtedly enough of a fiery spirit to keep him free, if this were the true defence of freedom; but gradually his pride was curbed, his power broken; a greater tyrant swallowed him up; and the descendants of nobles, who would have died sooner than brooked a master, were turned into courtiers, as pliant as their fathers had been ferocious.

But "the free states of antiquity," we are told, "had slaves." So had the monarchies of the same periods. With which of these institutions was slavery most congenial? To which did it most probably give support? Besides, it is only by courtesy that we call the ancient republics free. Rome in her best days was an aristocracy; nor were private rights, which it is the chief office of liberty to protect, rendered a whit more secure by the gradual triumphs of the people over patrician power. Slavery was at all periods the curse of Rome. The great mass of her free population, throwing almost every laborious occupation on the slaves, became an idle, licentious rabble; and this unprincipled populace, together with the slaves, furnished ready instruments for every private and public crime. When Clodius prowled the streets of Rome for the murder of Cicero and the best citizens, his train was composed in part of slaves, fit bloodhounds for his nefarious work. The Republic in its proudest days was desolated and convulsed by servile wars. Imperial Rome was over-

Hosted by Google

whelmed by savage hordes, for this among other reasons, that her whole peasantry consisted either of slaves, or of nominal freemen degraded to a servile condition, so that the legions could be recruited only from tribes of barbarians whom she had formerly subdued.

But the great argument in favor of the political benefits of slavery, remains to be stated. In plain language it amounts to this, that slavery excludes the laboring or poorer classes from the elective franchise, from political power; and it is the turbulence of these classes which is supposed to constitute the chief peril of liberty. But in slave-holding communities, are there no distinctions of condition among the free? Are none comparatively poor? Is there no democracy? Was not Athens, crowded as she was with slaves, the most turbulent of democracies? And further, do not the idleness and impatience of restraint, into which the free of a slave-holding community naturally fall, generate an intenser party-spirit, fiercer political passions, and more desperate instruments of ambition, than can be found among the laboring classes in a community where slavery is unknown? In which of the two great divisions of our own country are political strifes most likely to be settled by the sword? In the Slave-holding States, or the Free? The laboring classes, when brought up under free institutions and equal laws, are not necessarily or peculiarly disposed to abuse the elective franchise. Their daily toil, often exhausting, secures them from habitual political excitement. The most powerful spirits among them are continually rising to a prosperity, which gives them an interest in public order. There is also a general diffusion of property, the result of unfettered industry, which forms a general motive to the sup-

Hosted by Google

port of the laws. It should be added, that the domestic virtues and religious sentiments, which in a Christian country spread through all ranks, and spread more widely among the industrious than the idle, are powerful checks on the passions, strong barriers against civil convulsion. Idleness, rather than toil, makes the turbulent partisan. Whoever knows the state of society in the Free States, can testify, that the love of liberty, pride in our free institutions, and jealousy of rights, are nowhere more active than in those very classes which in a slave-holding country are reduced to servitude. Undoubtedly the jealousies, passions, and prejudices of the laboring portion of the community may work evil, and even ruin to the state; and so may the luxury, the political venality, the gambling spirit of trade, and the cupidity, to be found in other ranks or conditions. If freedom must be denied wherever it will be endangered, then every class in society must be reduced to slavery.

Free institutions rest on two great political virtues, the love of liberty and the love of order. The slave-holder (I mean the slave-holder by choice) is of necessity more or less wanting in both. How plain is it, that no man can love liberty with a true love, who has the heart to wrest it from others! Attachment to freedom does not consist in spurning indignantly a yoke prepared for our own necks; for this is done even by the savage and the beast of prey. It is a moral sentiment, an impartial desire and choice, that others as well as ourselves may be protected from every wrong, may be exempted from every unjust restraint. Slave-holding, when perpetuated selfishly and from choice, is at open war with this generous principle. It is a plain, habitual contempt of human rights, and of course impairs that sense of

Hosted by Google

their sanctity, which is their best protection. It offers, every day and hour, a precedent of usurpation to the ambitious. It creates a caste with despotic powers; and under such guardians is liberty peculiarly secure? It creates a burning zeal for the rights of a privileged class, but not for the Rights of Men. These the voluntary slave-holder casts down by force; and, in the changes of human affairs, the time may not be distant, when he will learn, that force, accustomed to triumph over right, is prone to leap every bound, and to make the proud as well as abject stoop to its sway.

Slavery is also hostile to the love of order, which, in union with the love of liberty, is the great support of free institutions. Slave-holding in a republic tends directly to lawlessness. It gives the habit of command, not of obedience. The absolute master is not likely to distinguish himself by subjection to the civil power. The substitution of passion and self-will for law, is nowhere so common as in the Slave-holding States. In these it is thought honorable to rely on one's own arm, rather than on the magistrate, for the defence of many rights. In some, perhaps many, districts, the chief peace-officer seems to be the weapon worn as part of the common dress; and the multitude seem to be more awed by one another's passions, than by the authority of the state. Such communities have no pledge of stable liberty. Reverence for the laws, as manifestations of the public will, is the very spirit of free institutions. Does this spirit find its best nutriment in the habits and feelings generated by slavery?

Slavery is a strange element to mix up with free institutions. It cannot but endanger them. It is a pattern for every kind of wrong. The slave brings insecurity

Hosted by Google

on the free. Whoever holds one human being in bondage, invites others to plant the foot on his own neck. Thanks to God, not one human being can be wronged with impunity. The liberties of a people ought to tremble, until every man is free. Tremble they will. Their true foundation is sapped by the legalized degradation of a single innocent man to slavery. That foundation is impartial justice, is respect for human nature, is respect for the rights of every human being.

I have endeavoured, in these remarks, to show the hostility between slavery and free institutions. If, however, I err, if these institutions cannot stand without slavery for their foundation, then I say, Let them fall. Then they ought to be buried in perpetual ruins. Then the name of republicanism ought to become a by-word and reproach among the nations. Then monarchy, limited as it is in England, is incomparably better and happier than our more popular forms. Then despotism, as it exists in Prussia, where equal laws are in the main administered with impartiality, ought to be preferred. A republican government, bought by the sacrifice of half or more than half of a people, by stripping them of their most sacred rights, by degrading them to a brutal condition, would cost too much. A freedom so tainted with wrong ought to be our abhorrence. They, who tell us that slavery is a necessary condition of a republic, do not justify the former, but pronounce a sentence of reprobation on the latter. If they speak truth, we are bound as a people to seek more just and generous institutions, under which the rights of all will be secure.

I have now placed before the reader the chief evils of slavery. We are told, however, that these are not

Hosted by Google

without mitigation, that slavery has advantages which do much to counterbalance its wrongs and pains. Not a few are partially reconciled to the institution by the language of confidence in which its benefits are sometimes announced. I shall therefore close this chapter with a very brief consideration of what are thought to be the advantages of slavery.

It is often said, that the slave does less work than the free laborer; he bears a lighter burden than liberty would lay on him. Perhaps this is generally true; yet, when circumstances promise profit to the master from the imposition of excessive labor, the slave is not spared. In the West Indies, the terrible waste of life among the over-worked cultivators, required large supplies from Africa to keep up the failing population. In this country it is probably true, that the slave works less than the free laborer; but it does not therefore follow, that his work is lighter. For what is it that lightens toil? It is Hope; it is Love; it is Strong Motive. That labor is light which we do from the heart, to which a great good quickens us, which is to better our lot. That labor is light which is to comfort, adorn, and cheer our homes, to give instruction to our children, to solace the declining years of a parent, to give to our grateful and generous sentiments the means of exertion. Great effort from great motives is the best definition of a happy life. The easiest labor is a burden to him who has no motive for performing it. How wearisome is the task imposed by another, and wrongfully imposed! The slave cannot easily be made to do a freeman's work; and why? Because he wants a freeman's spirit, because the spring of labor is impaired within him, because he works as a machine, not a free agent. The compulsion,

Hosted by Google

under which he toils for another, takes from labor its sweetness, makes the daily round of life arid and dull, makes escape from toil the chief interest of life.

We are further told, that the slave is freed from all care, that he is sure of future support, that when old he is not dismissed to the poor-house, but fed and sheltered in his own hut. This is true; but it is also true that nothing can be gained by violating the great laws and essential rights of our nature. The slave, we are told, has no care, his future is provided for. Yet God created him to provide for the future, to take care of his own happiness; and he cannot be freed from this care without injury to his moral and intellectual life. Why has God given foresight and power over the future, but to be used? Is it a blessing to a rational creature to be placed in a condition which chains his faculties to the present moment, which leaves nothing before him to rouse the intellect or touch the heart? Be it also remembered, that the same provision, which relieves the slave from anxiety, cuts him off from hope. The future is not, indeed, haunted by spectres of poverty, nor is it brightened by images of joy. It stretches before him sterile, monotonous, expanding into no refreshing verdure, and sending no cheering whisper of a better lot.

It is true that the free laborer may become a pauper; and so may the free rich man, both of the North and the South. Still, our capitalists never dream of flying to slavery as a security against the almshouse. Freedom undoubtedly has its perils. It offers nothing to the slothful and dissolute. Among a people left to seek their own good in their own way, some of all classes fail from vice, some from incapacity, some from misfortune. All

Hosted by Google

classes will furnish members to the body of the poor. But in this country the number is small, and ought constantly to decrease. The evil, however lamentable, is not so remediless and spreading as to furnish a motive for reducing half the population to chains. Benevolence does much to mitigate it. The best minds are inquiring how it may be prevented, diminished, removed. It is giving excitement to a philanthropy which creates out of misfortune new bonds of union between man and man.

Our slave-holding brethren, who tell us that the condition of the slave is better than that of the free laborer at the North, talk ignorantly and rashly. They do not, cannot know, what to us is matter of daily observation, that from the families of our farmers and mechanics have sprung our most distinguished men, men who have done most for science, arts, letters, religion, and freedom; and that the noblest spirits among us would have been lost to their country and mankind, had the laboring class here been doomed to slavery. They do not know, what we rejoice to tell them, that this class partakes largely of the impulse given to the whole community; that the means of intellectual improvement are multiplying to the laborious as fast as to the opulent; that our most distinguished citizens meet them as brethren, and communicate to them in public discourses their own most important acquisitions. Undoubtedly, the Christian, republican spirit is not working, even here, as it should. The more improved and prosperous classes have not yet learned, that it is their great mission to elevate morally and intellectually the less advanced classes of the community; but the great truth is more and more recognised, and accordingly a new era may be said to be opening on society.

Hosted by Google

It is said, however, that the slave, if not to be compared to the free laborer at the North, is in a happier condition than the Irish peasantry. Let this be granted. Let the security of the peasant's domestic relations, let his church and his school-house, and his faint hope of a better lot pass for nothing. Because Ireland is suffering from the misgovernment and oppression of ages, does it follow that a less grinding oppression is a good? Besides, are not the wrongs of Ireland acknowledged? Is not British legislation laboring to restore her prosperity? Is it not true, that, whilst the slave's lot admits no important change, the most enlightened minds are at work to confer on the Irish peasant the blessings of education, of equal laws, of new springs to exertion, of new sources of wealth? Other men, however fallen, may be lifted up. An immovable weight presses on the slave.

But still we are told, the slave is gay. He is not as wretched as our theories teach. After his toil, he sings, he dances, he gives no signs of an exhausted frame or gloomy spirit. The slave happy! Why, then, contend for rights? Why follow with beating hearts the struggles of the patriot for freedom? Why canonize the martyr to freedom? The slave happy! Then happiness is to be found in giving up the distinctive attributes of a man; in darkening intellect and conscience; in quenching generous sentiments; in servility of spirit; in living under a whip; in having neither property nor rights; in holding wife and child at another's pleasure; in toiling without hope; in living without an end! The slave, indeed, has his pleasures. His animal nature survives the injury to his rational and moral powers; and every animal has its enjoyments. The kindness

Hosted by Google

of Providence allows no human being to be wholly divorced from good. The lamb frolics; the dog leaps for joy; the bird fills the air with cheerful harmony; and the slave spends his holyday in laughter and the dance. Thanks to Him who never leaves himself without witness; who cheers even the desert with spots of verdure; and opens a fountain of joys in the most withered heart! It is not possible, however, to contemplate the occasional gayety of the slave without some mixture of painful thought. He is gay, because he has not learned to think; because he is too fallen to feel his wrongs; because he wants just self-respect. We are grieved by the gayety of the insane. There is a sadness in the gayety of him whose lightness of heart would be turned to bitterness and indignation, were one ray of light to awaken in him the spirit of a man.

That there are those among the free, who are more wretched than slaves, is undoubtedly true; just as there is incomparably greater misery among men than among brutes. The brute never knows the agony of a human spirit torn by remorse, or wounded in its love. But would we cease to be human, because our capacity for suffering increases with the elevation of our nature? All blessings may be perverted, and the greatest perverted most. Were we to visit a slave-country, undoubtedly the most miserable human beings would be found among the free; for among them the passions have wider sweep, and the power they possess may be used to their own ruin. Liberty is not a necessity of happiness. It is only a means of good. It is a trust which may be abused. Are all such trusts to be cast away? Are they not the greatest gifts of Heaven?

But the slave, we are told, often manifests affection

Hosted by Google

to his master, grieves at his departure, and welcomes his return. I will not endeavour to explain this, by saying that the master's absence places the slave under the overseer. Nor will I object, that the slave's propensity to steal from his master, his need of the whip to urge him to toil, and the dread of insurrection which he inspires, are signs of any thing but love. There is, undoubtedly, much more affection in this relation than could be expected. Of all races of men, the African is the mildest and most susceptible of attachment. He loves, where the European would hate. He watches the life of a master, whom the North American Indian, in like circumstances, would stab to the heart. The African is affectionate. Is this a reason for holding him in chains? We cannot, however, think of this most interesting feature of slavery with unmixed pleasure. It is the curse of slavery, that it can touch nothing which it does not debase. Even love, that sentiment given us by God to be the germ of a divine virtue, becomes in the slave a weakness, almost a degradation. His affections lose much of their beauty and dignity. He ought, indeed, to feel benevolence toward his master; but to attach himself to a man who keeps him in the dust and denies him the rights of a man; to be grateful and devoted to one who extorts his toil and debases him into a chattel; this has a taint of servility, which makes us grieve whilst we admire. However, we would not diminish the attachment of the slave. He is the happier for his generosity. Let him love his master, and let the master win love by kindness. We only say, let not this manifestation of a generous nature in the slave be turned against him. Let it not be made an answer to an exposition of his wrongs. Let it not be used as a weapon for his perpetual degradation.

Hosted by Google

But the slave, we are told, is taught Religion. This is the most cheering sound which comes to us from the land of bondage. We are rejoiced to learn, that any portion of the slaves are instructed in that truth, which gives inward freedom. They hear at least one voice of deep, genuine love, the voice of Christ; and read in his cross what all other things hide from them, the unutterable worth of their spiritual nature. This portion, however, is small. The greater part are still buried in heathen ignorance. Besides, religion, though a great good, can hardly exert its full power on the slave. Will it not be taught to make him obedient to his master, rather than to raise him to the dignity of a man? Is slavery, which tends so proverbially to debase the mind, the preparation for spiritual truth? Can the slave comprehend the principle of Love, the essential principle of Christianity, when he hears it from the lips of those whose relations to him express injustice and selfishness? But suppose him to receive Christianity in its purity, and to feel all its power. Is this to reconcile us to slavery? Is a being, who can understand the sublimest truth which has ever entered the human mind, who can love and adore God, who can conform himself to the celestial virtue of the Saviour, for whom that Saviour died, to whom heaven is opened, whose repentance now gives joy in heaven, — is such a being to be held as property, driven by force as the brute, and denied the rights of man by a fellow-creature, by a professed disciple of the just and merciful Saviour? Has he a religious nature, and dares any one hold him as a slave?

I have now completed my views of the evils of slavery, and have shown how little they are mitigated by

Hosted by Google

what are thought its advantages. In this whole discussion I have cautiously avoided quoting particular examples of its baneful influences. I have not brought together accounts of horrible cruelty which come to us from the South. I have confined myself to the natural tendencies of slavery, to evils bound up in its very nature, which, as long as man is man, cannot be separated from it. That these evils are unmixed, I do not say. More or less of good may often be found in connexion with them. No institution, be it what it may, can make the life of a human being wholly evil, or cut off every means of improvement. God's benevolence triumphs over all the perverseness and folly of man's devices. He sends a cheering beam into the darkest abode. The slave has his hours of exhilaration. His hut occasionally rings with thoughtless mirth. Among this class, too, there are and must be, occasionally, higher pleasures. God is no respecter of persons; and in some slaves there is a happy nature which no condition can destroy, just as among children we find some whom the worst education cannot spoil. The African is so affectionate, imitative, and docile, that in favorable circumstances he catches much that is good; and accordingly the influence of a wise and kind master will be seen in the very countenance and bearing of his slaves. Among this degraded people, there are, occasionally, examples of superior intelligence and virtue, showing the groundlessness of the opinion that they are incapable of filling a higher rank than slavery, and showing that human nature is too generous and hardy to be wholly destroyed in the most unpropitious state. We also witness in this class, and very often, a superior physical developement, a grace of form and motion, which almost extorts a

Hosted by Google

feeling approaching respect. I mean not to affirm, that slavery excludes all good, for human life cannot long endure under the privation of every thing happy and improving. I have spoken of its natural tendencies and results. These are wholly and only evil.

I am aware that it will be replied to the views now given of slavery, that persons living at a distance from it cannot comprehend it, that its true character can be learned only from those who know it practically, and are familiar with its operations. To this I will not reply, that I have seen it near at hand. It is sufficient to reply, that men may lose the power of seeing an object fairly, by being too near as well as by being too remote. The slave-holder is too familiar with slavery to understand it. To be educated in injustice is almost necessarily to be blinded by it more or less. To exercise usurped power from birth is the surest way to look upon it as a right and a good. The slave-holder tells us, that he only can instruct us about slavery. But suppose that we wished to learn the true character of despotism; should we go to the palace, and take the despot as our teacher? Should we pay much heed to his assurance, that he alone could understand the character of absolute power, and that we in a republic could know nothing of the condition of men subjected to irresponsible will? The sad influence of slavery, in darkening the mind which is perpetually conversant with it, is disclosed to us in the recent attempts made at the South to represent this institution as a good. Freemen, who would sooner die than resign their rights, talk of the happiness of those from whom every right is wrested. They talk of the slave as "property," with the same confidence as if this were the holiest claim. This is one of the mourn-

Hosted by Google

ful effects of slavery. It darkens the moral sense of the master. And can men, whose position is so unfavorable to just, impartial judgment, expect us to acquiesce in their views?

There is another reply. If the Slave-holding States expect us to admit their views of this institution, they must allow it to be freely discussed among themselves. Of what avail is their testimony in favor of slavery, when not a tongue is allowed to say a word in its condemnation? Of what use is the press, when it can publish only on one side? In large portions of the Slave-holding States, freedom of speech on this subject is at an end. Whoever should publish among them the sentiments respecting slavery, which are universally adopted through the civilized world, would put his life in jeopardy, would probably by flayed or hung. On this great subject, which affects vitally their peace and prosperity, their moral and political interests, no philanthropist, who has come to the truth, can speak his mind. Even the minister of religion, who feels the hostility between slavery and Christianity, dares not speak. His calling might not save him from popular rage. Thus slavery avenges itself. It brings the masters under despotism. It takes away that liberty which a freeman prizes as life, liberty of speech. All this, we are told, is necessary, and so it may be; but an institution imposing such a necessity cannot be a good: and one thing is plain; the testimony of men placed under such restraints cannot be too cautiously received. We have better sources of knowledge. We have the testimony of ages, and the testimony of the unchangeable principles of human nature. These assure us that slavery is "evil, and evil continually."

Hosted by Google

I ought not to close this head without acknowledging, (what I cheerfully do,) that in many cases the kindness of masters does much for the mitigation of slavery. Could it be rendered harmless, the efforts of many would not be spared to make it so. It is evil, not through any singular corruption in the slave-holder, but from its own nature, and in spite of all efforts to make it a good. It is evil, not because it exists on this or that spot. Were it planted at the North, it might become a greater curse, more hardening and depraving, than it now proves under a milder sky. It is not of the particular form of slavery in this country that I complain. I am willing to allow that it is here comparatively mild; that on many plantations no abuses exist, but such as are inseparable from its very nature. The mischief lies in its very nature. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." An institution so founded in wrong, so imbued with injustice, cannot be made a good. It cannot, like other institutions, be perpetuated by being improved. To improve it, is to prepare the way for its subversion. Every melioration of the slave's lot is a step toward freedom. Slavery is thus radically, essentially evil. Every good man should earnestly pray, and use every virtuous influence, that an institution so blighting to human nature may be brought to an end.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER V.

SCRIPTURE.

Attempts are often made to support slavery by the authority of Revelation. "Slavery," it is said, "is allowed in the Old Testament, and not condemned in the New. Paul commands slaves to obey. He commands masters, not to release their slaves, but to treat them justly. Therefore slavery is right, is sanctified by God's Word." In this age of the world, and amidst the light which has been thrown on the true interpretation of the Scriptures, such reasoning hardly deserves notice. A few words only will be offered in reply.

This reasoning proves too much. If usages, sanctioned in the Old Testament and not forbidden in the New, are right, then our moral code will undergo a sad deterioration. Polygamy was allowed to the Israelites, was the practice of the holiest men, and was common and licensed in the age of the Apostles. But the Apostles nowhere condemn it, nor was the renunciation of it made an essential condition of admission into the Christian church. It is true, that in one passage Christ has condemned it by implication. But is not slavery condemned by stronger implication, in the many passages which make the new religion to consist in serving one another, and in doing to others what we

Hosted by Google

would that they should do to ourselves? Why may not Scripture be used to stock our houses with wives as well as with slaves?

Again. Paul is said to sanction slavery. Let us now ask, What was slavery in the age of Paul? It was the slavery, not so much of black as of white men, not merely of barbarians, but of Greeks, not merely of the ignorant and debased, but of the virtuous, educated, and refined. Piracy and conquest were the chief means of supplying the slave-market, and they heeded neither character nor condition. Sometimes the greater part of the population of a captured city was sold into bondage, sometimes the whole, as in the case of Jerusalem. Noble and royal families, the rich and great, the learned and powerful, the philosopher and poet, the wisest and best men, were condemned to the chain. Such was ancient slavery. And this, we are told, is allowed and confirmed by the word of God! Had Napoleon, on capturing Berlin or Vienna, doomed most or the whole of their inhabitants to bondage; had he seized on venerable matrons, the mothers of illustrious men, who were reposing, after virtuous lives, in the bosom of grateful families; had he seized on the delicate, refined, beautiful young woman, whose education had prepared her to grace the sphere in which God had placed her, and over all whose prospects the freshest hopes and most glowing imaginations of early life were breathed; had he seized on the minister of religion, the man of science, the man of genius, the sage, the guides of the world; had he scattered these through the slave-markets of the world, and transferred them to the highest bidders at public auction, the men to be converted into instruments of slavish toil, the women into instruments of lust, and

Hosted by Google

both to endure whatever indignities and tortures absolute power can inflict; we should then have had a picture, in the present age, of slavery as it existed in the time of Paul. Such slavery, we are told, was sanctioned by the Apostle! Such, we are told, he pronounced to be morally right! Had Napoleon sent some cargoes of these victims to these shores, we might have bought them, and degraded the noblest beings to our lowest uses, and might have cited Paul to testify to our innocence! Were an infidel to bring this charge against the Apostle, we should say that he was laboring in his vocation; but that a professed Christian should so insult this sainted philanthropist, this martyr to truth and benevolence, is a sad proof of the power of slavery to blind its supporters to the plainest truth.

Slavery, in the age of the Apostle, had so penetrated society, was so intimately interwoven with it, and the materials of servile war were so abundant, that a religion, preaching freedom to the slave, would have shaken the social fabric to its foundation, and would have armed against itself the whole power of the state. Paul did not then assail the institution. He satisfied himself with spreading principles, which, however slowly, could not but work its destruction. He commanded Philemon to receive his fugitive slave, Onesimus, "not as a slave, but above a slave, as a brother beloved;" and he commanded masters to give to their slaves that which was "*just* and *equal*"; thus asserting for the slave the rights of a Christian and a Man; and how, in his circumstances, he could have done more for the subversion of slavery, I do not see.

Let me offer another remark. The perversion of Scripture to the support of slavery is singularly inexcus-

Hosted by Google

able in this country. Paul not only commanded slaves to obey their masters. He delivered these precepts: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." This passage was written in the time of Nero. It teaches passive obedience to despotism more strongly than any text teaches the lawfulness of slavery. Accordingly, it has been quoted for ages by the supporters of arbitrary power, and made the stronghold of tyranny. Did our fathers acquiesce in the most obvious interpretation of this text? Because the first Christians were taught to obey despotic rule, did our fathers feel as if Christianity had stripped men of their rights? Did they argue, that tyranny was to be excused, because forcible opposition to it is in most cases wrong? Did they argue, that absolute power ceases to be unjust, because, as a general rule, it is the duty of subjects to obey? Did they infer that bad institutions ought to be perpetual, because the subversion of them by force will almost always inflict greater evil than it removes? No; they were wiser interpreters of God's Word. They believed that despotism was a wrong, notwithstanding the general obligation upon its subjects to obey; and that whenever a whole people should so feel the wrong as to demand its removal, the time for removing it had fully come. Such is the school in which we here have been brought up. To us, it is no mean proof of the divine original of Christianity, that it teaches human brotherhood and favors human rights; and yet, on the ground of two or three passages, which admit different constructions, we

Hosted by Google

make Christianity the minister of slavery, the forger of chains for those whom it came to make free.

It is a plain rule of Scriptural criticism, that particular texts should be interpreted according to the general tenor and spirit of Christianity. And what is the general, the perpetual teaching of Christianity in regard to social duty? "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." Now does not every man feel, that nothing, nothing, could induce him to consent to be a slave? Does he not feel, that, if reduced to this abject lot, his whole nature, his reason, conscience, affections, would cry out against it as the greatest of calamities and wrongs? Can he pretend, then, that, in holding others in bondage, he does to his neighbour what he would that his neighbour should do to him? Of what avail are a few texts, which were designed for local and temporary use, when urged against the vital, essential spirit, and the plainest precepts of our religion?

I close this section with a few extracts from a recent work of one of our most distinguished writers; not that I think additional arguments necessary, but because the authority of Scripture is more successfully used than any thing else to reconcile good minds to slavery.

"This very course, which the Gospel takes on this subject, seems to have been the only one that could have been taken in order to effect the universal abolition of slavery. The Gospel was designed, not for one race or for one time, but for all races and for all times. It looked, not at the abolition of this form of evil for that age alone, but for its universal abolition. Hence the important object of its author was to gain it a lodgment in every part of the known world; so that, by its uni-

Hosted by Google

versal diffusion among all classes of society, it might quietly and peacefully modify and subdue the evil passions of men; and thus, without violence, work a revolution in the whole mass of mankind. In this manner alone could its object, a universal moral revolution, have been accomplished. For if it had forbidden the *evil*, instead of subverting the *principle*, if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery, and taught slaves to *resist* the oppression of their masters, it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilized world; its announcement would have been the signal of servile war; and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitations of universal bloodshed. The fact, under these circumstances, that the Gospel does not forbid slavery, affords no reason to suppose that it does not mean to prohibit it; much less does it afford ground for belief that Jesus Christ intended *to authorize it*.

"It is important to remember, that two grounds of moral obligation are distinctly recognised in the Gospel. The first is our duty to man as man; that is, on the ground of the relation which men sustain to each other; the second is our duty to man as a creature of God; that is, on the ground of the relation which we all sustain to God.—Now it is to be observed, that it is precisely upon this latter ground that the slave is commanded to obey his master. It is never urged, like the duty of obedience to parents, *because it is right*, but because the cultivation of meekness and forbearance under injury will be well-pleasing unto God.—The manner in which the duty of servants or slaves is inculcated, therefore, affords no ground for the assertion, that the Gospel authorizes one man to hold another in bondage, any

Hosted by Google

more than the command to honor the king, when that king was Nero, authorized the tyranny of the emperor; or than the command to turn the other cheek, when one is smitten, justifies the infliction of violence by an injurious man." *

* Wayland's "Elements of Moral Science," pages 225 and 226. The discussion of Slavery, in the chapter from which these extracts are made, is well worthy attention.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER VI.

MEANS OF REMOVING SLAVERY.

How slavery shall be removed, is a question for the slave-holder, and one which he alone can fully answer. He alone has an intimate knowledge of the character and habits of the slaves, to which the means of emancipation should be carefully adapted. General views and principles may and should be suggested at a distance; but the mode of applying them can be understood only by those who dwell on the spot where the evil exists. To the slave-holder belongs the duty of settling and employing the best methods of liberation, and to no other. We have no right of interference, nor do we desire it. We hold that the dangers of emancipation, if such there are, would be indefinitely increased, were the boon to come to the slave from a foreign hand, were he to see it forced on the master by a foreign power. It is of the highest importance that slavery should be succeeded by a friendly relation between master and slave; and to produce this, the latter must see in the former his benefactor and deliverer. His liberty must seem to him an expression of benevolence and regard for his rights. He must put confidence in his superiors, and look to them cheerfully and gratefully for counsel and aid. Let him feel that liberty has been wrung

Hosted by Google

from an unwilling master, who would willingly replace the chain, and jealousy, vindictiveness, and hatred would spring up, to blight the innocence and happiness of his new freedom, and to make it a peril to himself and all around him. I believe, indeed, that emancipation, though so bestowed, would be better than everlasting bondage; but the responsibility of so conferring it, is one that none of us are anxious to assume.

We cannot but fear much from the experiment now in progress in the West Indies, on account of its being the work of a foreign hand. The planters, especially of Jamaica, have opposed the mother-country with a pertinaciousness bordering on insanity; have done much to exasperate the slaves, whose freedom they could not prevent; have done nothing to prepare them for liberty; have met them with gloom on their countenances, and with evil auguries on their lips; have taught them to look abroad for relief, and to see in their masters only obstructions to the amelioration of their lot. It is possible, that, under all these obstacles, emancipation may succeed. God grant it success! If it fail, the planter will have brought the ruin very much on himself. Policy, as well as duty, so plainly taught him to take into his own hands the work which a superior power had begun, to spare no effort, no expense, for binding to him by new ties those who were to throw off their former chains, that we know not how to account for his conduct, but by supposing that his unhappy position as a slave-holder had robbed him of his reason, as well as blunted his moral sense.

In this country no power but that of the Slave holding States can remove the evil, and none of us are anxious to take the office from their hands. They alone can

Hosted by Google

do it safely. They alone can determine and apply the true and sure means of emancipation. That such means exist I cannot doubt; for emancipation has already been carried through successfully in other countries; and even were there no precedent, I should be sure, that, under God's benevolent and righteous government, there could not be a necessity for holding human beings in perpetual bondage. This faith, however, is not universal. Many, when they hear of the evils of slavery, say, "It is bad, but remediless. There are no means of relief." They say, in a despairing tone, "Give us your plan;" and justify their indifference to emancipation, by what they call its hopelessness. This state of mind has induced me to offer a few remarks on the means of removing slavery; not that I think of drawing up a plan; for to this I am necessarily unequal. No individual so distant can do the work, to which the whole intellect and benevolence of the South should be summoned. I wish only to suggest a few principles, which I think would ensure a happy result to the benevolent enterprise, and which may help to remove the incredulity of which I have complained.

What, then, is to be done for the removal of slavery? In the first place, the great principle, that man cannot rightfully be held as property, should be admitted by the slave-holder. As to any public forms of setting forth this principle, they are of little or no moment, provided it be received into the mind and heart. The slave should be acknowledged as a partaker of a common nature, as having the essential rights of humanity. This great truth lies at the foundation of every wise plan for his relief. The cordial admission of it would give a consciousness of dignity, of grandeur, to efforts

Hosted by Google

for emancipation. There is, indeed, a grandeur in the idea of raising more than two millions of human beings to the enjoyment of human rights, to the blessings of Christian civilization, to the means of indefinite improvement. The Slave-holding States are called to a nobler work of benevolence than is committed to any other communities. They should comprehend its dignity. This they cannot do, till the slave is truly, sincerely, with the mind and heart, recognised as a Man, till he ceases to be regarded as Property.

It may be asked, whether I intend that the slave should be immediately set free from all his present restraints. By no means. Nothing is farther from my thoughts. The slave cannot rightfully, and should not, be owned by the Individual. But, like every other citizen, he is subject to the community, and the community has a right and is bound to continue all such restraints, as its own safety and the well-being of the slave demand. It would be cruelty, not kindness, to the latter to give him a freedom, which he is unprepared to understand or enjoy. It would be cruelty to strike the fetters from a man, whose first steps would infallibly lead him to a precipice. The Slave should not have an owner, but he should have a guardian. He needs authority, to supply the lack of that discretion which he has not yet attained; but it should be the authority of a friend; an official authority, conferred by the state, and for which there should be responsibleness to the state; an authority especially designed to prepare its subjects for personal freedom. The slave should not, in the first instance, be allowed to wander at his will beyond the plantation on which he toils; and if he cannot be induced to work by rational and natural motives, he

Hosted by Google

should be obliged to labor; on the same principles on which the vagrant in other communities is confined and compelled to earn his bread. The gift of liberty would be a mere name, and worse than nominal, were he to be let loose on society, under circumstances driving him to crimes, for which he would be condemned to severer bondage than he had escaped. Many restraints must be continued; but continued, not because the colored race are property, not because they are bound to live and toil for an owner, but solely and wholly because their own innocence, security, and education, and the public order and peace, require them, during the present incapacity, to be restrained. It should be remembered, that this incapacity is not their fault, but their misfortune; that not they, but the community, are responsible for it; and that the community, without crime, profit by its own wrong. If the government should make any distinction among the citizens, it should be in behalf of the injured. Instead of urging the past existence of slavery, and the incapacity which it has induced, as apologies, or reasons for continuing the yoke, the community should find in these very circumstances new obligations to effort for the wronged.

There is but one weighty argument against immediate emancipation, namely, that the slave would not support himself and his children by honest industry; that, having always worked on compulsion, he will not work without it; that, having always labored from another's will, he will not labor from his own; that there is no spring of exertion in his own mind; that he is unused to forethought, providence, and self-denial, and the responsibilities of domestic life; that freedom would produce idleness; idleness, want; want, crime; and

Hosted by Google

that crime, when it should become the habit of numbers, would bring misery, perhaps ruin, not only on the offenders, but the state. Here lies the strength of the argument for continuing present restraint. Give the slaves disposition and power to support themselves and their families by honest industry, and complete emancipation should not be delayed one hour.

The great step, then, towards the removal of slavery is to prepare the slaves for self-support. And this work seems attended with no peculiar difficulty. The colored man is not a savage, to whom toil is torture, who has centred every idea of happiness and dignity in a wild freedom, who must exchange the boundless forest for a narrow plantation, and bend his proud neck to an unknown yoke. Labor was his first lesson, and he has been repeating it all his life. Can it be a hard task to teach him to labor for himself, to work from impulses in his own breast?

Much may be done at once to throw the slave on himself, to accustom him to work for his own and his family's support, to awaken forethought, and strengthen the habit of providing for the future. On every plantation there are slaves, who would do more for wages than from fear of punishment. There are those, who, if intrusted with a piece of ground, would support themselves and pay a rent in kind. There are those, who, if moderate task-work were given them, would gain their whole subsistence in their own time. Now every such man ought to be committed very much to himself. It is a crime to subject to the whip a man who can be made to toil from rational and honorable motives. This partial introduction of freedom would form a superior class among the slaves, whose example would have

Hosted by Google

immense moral power on those who needed compulsion. The industrious and thriving would give an impulse to the whole race. It is important that the property, thus earned by the slave, should be made as sacred as that of any other member of the community, and for this end he should be enabled to obtain redress of wrongs. In case of being injured by his master in this or in any respect, he should either be set free, or, if unprepared for liberty, should be transferred to another guardian. This system may seem to many to be attended with insuperable difficulties; but if established and watched over by a community sincerely desirous of emancipation (and no other influence can establish it here), it would find in public sentiment, even more than in law, the means of execution.

As another means of raising the slave and fitting him to act from higher motives than compulsion, a system of bounties and rewards should be introduced. New privileges, increased indulgences, honorable distinctions, expressions of respect, should be awarded to the honest and industrious. No people are more alive to commendation and honorable distinction than the colored race. Prizes for good conduct, adapted to their tastes and character, might in a good degree supersede the lash. The object is to bring the slave to labor from other motives than brutal compulsion. Such motives may easily be found, if the end be conscientiously proposed.

One of the great means of elevating the slave, and calling forth his energies, is to place his domestic relations on new ground. This is essential. We wish him to labor for his family. Then he must have a family to labor for. Then his wife and children must be truly

Hosted by Google

his own. Then his home must be inviolate. Then the responsibilities of a husband and father must be laid on him. It is agreed that he will be fit for freedom as soon as the support of his family shall become his habit and his happiness; and how can he be brought to this condition, as long as he shall see no sanctity in the marriage bond, as long as he shall see his wife and his children exposed to indignity and to sale, as long as their support shall not be intrusted to his care? No measure for preparing the slave for liberty can be so effectual as the improvement of his domestic lot. The whole power of religion should be employed to impress him with the sacredness and duties of marriage. The chaste and the faithful in this connexion should receive open and strong marks of respect. They should be treated as at the head of their race. The husband and wife, who prove false to each other, and who will not labor for their children, should be visited with the severest rebuke. To create a sense of domestic obligation, to awaken domestic affections, to give the means of domestic happiness, to fix deeply a conviction of the indissolubleness of marriage, and of the solemnity of the parental relation, these are the essential means of raising the slave to a virtuous and happy freedom. All other men labor for their families; and so will the slave, if the sentiments of a man be cherished in his breast. We keep him in bondage, because, if free, he will leave his wife and children to want; and this bondage breaks down all the feelings and habits which would incite him to toil for their support. Not a step will be taken towards the preparation of the slave for voluntary labor, till his domestic rights be respected. The viola-

Hosted by Google

tion of these cries to God, more than any other evil of his lot.

To carry this and all other means of improvement into effect, it is essential that the slave should no longer be bought and sold. As long as he is made an article of merchandise, he cannot be fitted for the offices of a man. He will have little motive to accumulate comforts and ornaments in his hut, if at any moment he may be torn from it. While treated as property, he will have little encouragement to accumulate property, for it cannot be secure. While his wife and children may be exposed at auction, and carried he knows not where, can he be expected to feel and act as a husband and father? It is time that this Christian and civilized country should no longer be dishonored by one of the worst usages of barbarism. Break up the slave-market, and one of the chief obstructions to emancipation will be removed.

Let me only add, that religious instruction should go hand in hand with all other means for preparing the slave for freedom. The colored race are said to be peculiarly susceptible of the religious sentiment. If this be addressed wisely and powerfully, if the slave be brought to feel his relation and accountableness to God, and to comprehend the spirit of Christianity, he is fit for freedom. To accomplish this work, perhaps preaching should not be the only or chief instrument. Were the colored population to be assembled into Sunday-schools, and were the whites to become their teachers, a new and interesting relation would be formed between the races, and an influence be exerted which would do much to insure safety to the gift of freedom.

In these remarks, I have not intended to say that

Hosted by Google

emancipation is an easy work, the work of a day, a good to be accomplished without sacrifices and toil. The colored man is, indeed, singularly susceptible of improvement, in consequence of the strength of his propensities to imitation and sympathy. But all great changes in society have their difficulties and inconveniences, and demand patient labor. I ask for no precipitate measures, no violent changes. What is needed is, that the Slave-holding States should resolve conscientiously and in good faith to remove this greatest of moral evils and wrongs, and should bring immediately to the work their intelligence, virtue, and power. That its difficulties would yield before such energies, who can doubt? Our weakness for holy enterprises lies generally in our own reluctant wills. Breathe into men a fervent purpose, and you awaken powers before unknown. How soon would slavery disappear, were the obligation to remove it thoroughly understood and deeply felt! We are told that the Slave-holding States have recently prospered beyond all precedent. This accession to their wealth should be consecrated to the work of liberating their fellow-creatures. Not one indulgence should be added to their modes of life, until the cry of the oppressed has ceased from their fields, until the rights of every human being are restored. Government should devote itself to this as its great object. Legislatures should meet to free the slave. The church should rest not, day or night, till this stain be wiped away. Let the deliberations of the wise, the energies of the active, the wealth of the prosperous, the prayers and toils of the good, have Emancipation for their great end. Let this be discussed habitually in the family circle, in the conference of Christians, in

Hosted by Google

the halls of legislation. Let it mingle with the first thoughts of the slave-holder in the morning and the last at night. Who can doubt that to such a spirit God would reveal the means of wise and powerful action? There is but one obstacle to emancipation, and that is, the want of that spirit in which Christians and freemen should resolve to exterminate slavery.

I have said nothing of colonization among the means of removing slavery, because I believe that to rely on it for this object would be equivalent to a resolution to perpetuate the evil without end. Whatever good it may do abroad, and I trust it will do much, it promises little at home. If the Slave-holding States, however, should engage in colonization, with a firm faith in its practicableness, with an energy proportionate to its greatness, and with a sincere regard to the welfare of the colored race, I am confident it will not fail from want of sympathy and aid on the part of the other States. In truth, these States will not withhold their hearts or hands or wealth from any well-considered plan for the removal of slavery.

I have said nothing of the inconveniences and sufferings, which, it is urged, will follow emancipation, be it ever so safe; for these, if real, weigh nothing against the claims of justice. The most common objection is, that a mixture of the two races will be the result. Can this objection be urged in good faith? Can this mixture go on faster or more criminally than at the present moment? Can the slave-holder use the word "Amalgamation" without a blush? Nothing, nothing, can arrest this evil, but the raising of the colored woman to a new sense of character, to a new self-respect; and this she cannot gain but by being made free. That

Hosted by Google

emancipation will have its evils, we know; for all great changes, however beneficial, in the social condition of a people, must interfere with some interests, must bring loss or hardship to one class or another; but the evils of slavery exceed beyond measure the greatest which can attend its removal. Let the slave-holder desire earnestly, and in the spirit of self-sacrifice, to restore freedom, to secure the rights and the happiness of the slave, and a new light will break upon his path. "Every mountain of difficulty will be brought low, and the rough places be made smooth;" the means of duty will become clear. But without this spirit, no eloquence of man or angel can persuade the slave-holder of the safety of emancipation.

Some readers may perhaps be disappointed, that, in speaking of the means of removing slavery, I have suggested nothing which may be done for the cause by the friends of emancipation in the Free States. On this point my opinions may easily be gathered from what has been already said. Our proper and only means of action is, to spread the truth on the subject of slavery; and let none contemn this means because of its gradual influence. It is not therefore less sure. No state, unless cut off like Paraguay from the communion of nations, can at the present day escape the power of strong, deep, enlightened opinion. Every state, acknowledging Christianity, encouraging education, and holding intercourse with the civilized world, must be pervaded by great and universally acknowledged truths, especially when these, as in the present case, coincide with its prosperity as well as with its honor Let, then, the friends of freedom and humanity be true to

Hosted by Google

their principles, and commend them by wise inculcation to all within their influence. From this work let it be their constant care to exclude the evil passions, which so often bring reproach and failure on a good cause. It is by calm, firm assertion of great principles, and not by personalities and vituperations, that strengh is to be given to the constantly increasing reprobation of slavery through the civilized world.

Objections, however, are made to this mode of acting on slavery. We are told, that, in declaring slavery to be one of the greatest wrongs, we violate the Constitution. What! Can it be that a free constitution, intended to guard all rights, and especially to preserve inviolate the liberty of the press, has in any way foreclosed the discussion of a great moral and religious question? Nothing but express language, too plain to be escaped, can justify us in fastening on this venerable instrument so palpable an inconsistency. But, instead of being embodied in plain words, the doctrine in question is at best a matter of uncertain inference. Admit such licentiousness of construction, and there is no power which may not be grafted on the Constitution; the mercenary and ambitious may warp it into any shape to suit their designs. But on this point no labored reasoning is necessary. It is settled for us by the fathers of our freedom and the framers of our present government. In the period immediately succeeding the adoption of the Constitution, Franklin, the calm and sagacious, and Jay, the inflexibly just, were Presidents of Societies for the Abolition of Slavery Societies of this description were spread over a large part of the country, and were established even in Maryland and Virginia. We have the records of their annual con

Hosted by Google

ventions, and among their delegates we find some of the most honored names in our country. Those of us, whose recollections go back to that period, can bear witness to the freedom with which slavery was then discussed in conversation and by the press. The servile doctrine, which some would now fasten on the Constitution, would have been rejected with indignation by our fathers. That manly generation had not been enervated by long prosperity. The calculations of commerce and the spirit of gain had not then prescribed bounds to speech and the press.

It is further objected to the discussion of slavery, that it will incite the slaves to revolt. This objection is founded on ignorance. A book, addressed to the intelligent of this country and the world, and designed to operate on public opinion, could no more influence the slave, than a speech in an unknown tongue. Unlettered, confined to daily toil, and watched by the overseer, he is in little danger of catching the fever of liberty from discussions intended to act on the minds of the free. — This objection, if fairly carried out, is disproved by its absurdity. The amount of it is, that nothing must be published against slavery. Then the noblest and most popular works of literature must be proscribed. Then the writings of the sainted Cowper must undergo purgation ; for, among the witnesses against slavery, he is perhaps the most awakening. Then the history of the American Revolution must be blotted out. Then the newspapers must beware of speaking of human rights. In truth, our liberty must be kept a secret ; for the great danger of the slave-holder arises from the infusion of liberty into the whole of our social system. A grave book is a dead letter to the slave ; but

Hosted by Google

in our free institutions and manners, there is a living spirit, which he can comprehend and feel. Slavery, under a free government, is a jarring element; a startling contrast; and the most effectual means of preventing disaffection among the enslaved would be, to keep all signs of liberty out of their sight, to cast society in a servile mould, to make it a consistent despotism.

A good book, expounding at once the rights and duties of the slave, if it could be brought down to his comprehension, would rather quiet than disturb him; for it would teach him that submission to wrong is often a duty, and that, in his particular case, revolt would be an infraction of Divine as well as human laws. There are, indeed, some persons among us, so uninstructed in the established principles of moral and political science, as to imagine, that, when a writer pronounces slavery an aggravated wrong, he necessarily and of course summons the slave to insurrection. Such ought to know, what is so generally understood, that insurrection against the civil power is never authorized, but in cases which exclude all other modes of relief, and which give the hope of better institutions. A book, written under the influence to this truth, were it, against all probabilities, to reach the slave, would teach him patience, not exasperation.

It may be added, that, if we must cease to write against slavery, lest we stir up revolt, then we must cease to speak against it, for both must have the same tendency. Speech has wings, as well as the printed word. Sometimes the living voice is more quickening than the press. According to the objection under consideration, we must, then, shut our lips on this great subject. The condemning whisper must not be heard, lest

Hosted by Google

some rash hearer should echo and spread the fatal truth. And is it come to this, that freemen must not give utterance to their deepest moral convictions? Is slavery not only to darken the South, but to spread a prison-gloom over the North? Are the Free States to renounce one of their dearest rights, because, if they speak the language of freemen, some dangerous word may chance to stray beyond their borders, and may possibly find its way to the hut of the slave? If so, all rights must be renounced, as far and as fast as the fears, passions, and menaces of other parts of the country shall require the surrender.

Undoubtedly, if slavery be discussed, some will write about it petulantly, passionately, so as to stir up among the masters much unnecessary irritation. This evil must be expected and borne, unless we are prepared for a censorship of the press. There is no subject from which the rash can be debarred. Even the first principles of morals and religion, on which the order, safety, and happiness of society mainly rest, are sometimes covertly, sometimes directly impugned. But must nothing be written on morals and religion, must the wise and good be put to silence, because, under a system of freedom, the misguided and depraved will labor to obscure or subvert the truth? Would not the whole activity of life be arrested, if every power, which may be abused, should be renounced? Besides, is there any portion of our country, so wanting in wisdom, self-respect, and common self-control, as to be driven to rash and ruinous measures by coarse invectives, which in a great degree defeat themselves by their very violence? The declamations of the passionate on the sub-

Hosted by Google

ject of slavery pass by us at the North as "the idle wind, which we regard not." Liberty naturally runs into these extravagances, and they, who would tame it by laws to such propriety of expression as never to give offence, would leave us only the name of freemen.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER VII.

ABOLITIONISM.

The word ABOLITIONIST, in its true meaning, comprehends every man who feels himself bound to exert his influence for removing slavery. It is a name of honorable import, and was worn, not long ago, by such men as Franklin and Jay. Events, however, continually modify terms; and, of late, the word Abolitionist has been narrowed from its original import, and restricted to the members of associations formed among us to promote Immediate Emancipation. It is not without reluctance that I give up to a small body a name which every good man ought to bear. But to make myself intelligible, and to avoid circumlocution, I shall use the word in what is now its common acceptation.

I approach this subject unwillingly, because it will be my duty to censure those, whom at this moment I would on no account hold up to public displeasure. The persecutions, which the Abolitionists have suffered and still suffer, awaken only my grief and indignation, and incline me to defend them to the full extent which truth and justice will admit. To the persecuted of whatever name my sympathies are pledged, and especially to those who are persecuted in a cause substan-

Hosted by Google

tially good. I would not for worlds utter a word to justify the violence recently offered to a party, composed very much of men blameless in life, and holding the doctrine of non-resistance to injuries; and of women, exemplary in their various relations, and acting, however mistakenly, from benevolent and pious impulses.

Of the Abolitionists I know very few; but I am bound to say of these, that I honor them for their strength of principle, their sympathy with their fellow-creatures, and their active goodness. As a party, they are singularly free from political and religious sectarianism, and have been distinguished by the absence of management, calculation, and wordly wisdom. That they have ever proposed or desired insurrection or violence among the slaves, there is no reason to believe. All their principles repel the supposition. It is a remarkable fact, that, though the South and the North have been leagued to crush them, though they have been watched by a million of eyes, and though prejudice has been prepared to detect the slightest sign of corrupt communication with the slave, yet this crime has not been fastened on a single member of this body. A few individuals at the South have, indeed, been tortured or murdered by enraged multitudes, on the charge of stirring up revolt; but their guilt and their connection with the Abolitionists were not, and, from the peculiar circumstances of the case, could not be established by those deliberate and regular modes of investigation, which are necessary to an impartial judgment. Crimes, detected and hastily punished by the multitude in a moment of feverish suspicion and wild alarm, are generally creatures of fear and passion. The act, which caused the present explosion of popular feeling, was

Hosted by Google

the sending of pamphlets by the Abolitionists into the Slave-holding States. In so doing, they acted with great inconsideration; but they must have been insane, had they intended to stir up a servile war; for the pamphlets were sent, not by stealth, but by the public mail; and not to the slaves, but to the masters; to men in public life, to men of the greatest influence and distinction. Strange incendiaries these! They flourished their firebrands about at noon-day; and, still more, put them into the hands of the very men whom it is said they wished to destroy. They are accused, indeed, of having sent some of the pamphlets to the free colored people, and if so, they acted with great and culpable rashness. But the publicity of the whole transaction absolves them of corrupt design.

The charge of corrupt design, so vehemently brought against the Abolitionists, is groundless. The charge of fanaticism I have no desire to repel. But in the present age it will not do to deal harshly with the characters of fanatics. They form the mass of the people. Religion and Politics, Philanthropy and Temperance, Nullification and Antimasonry, the Levelling Spirit of the working man, and the Spirit of Speculation in the man of business, all run into fanaticism. This is the type of all our epidemics. A sober man who can find? The Abolitionists have but caught the fever of the day. That they should have escaped would have been a moral miracle.—I offer these remarks simply from a sense of justice. Had not a persecution, without parallel in our country, broken forth against this society, I should not have spoken a word in their defence. But whilst I have power, I owe it to the Persecuted. If they have laid themselves open to the laws, let them suffer. For

Hosted by Google

all their errors and sins let the tribunal of public opinion inflict the full measure of rebuke which they deserve. I ask no favor for them. But they shall not be stripped of the rights of man, of rights guarantied by the laws and Constitution, without one voice, at least, being raised in their defence.

The Abolitionists have done wrong, I believe; nor is their wrong to be winked at, because done fanatically or with good intention; for how much mischief may be wrought with good design! They have fallen into the common error of enthusiasts, that of taking too narrow views, of feeling as if no evil existed but that which they opposed, and as if no guilt could be compared with that of countenancing or upholding it. The tone of their newspapers, as far as I have seen them, has often been fierce, bitter, exasperating. Their imaginations have fed too much on pictures of the cruelty to which the slave is exposed, till not a few have probably conceived of his abode as perpetually resounding with the lash, and ringing with shrieks of agony. I know that many of their publications have been calm, well considered, abounding in strong reasoning, and imbued with an enlightened love of freedom. But some, which have been most widely scattered, and are most adapted to act on the common mind, have had a tone unfriendly both to manners and to the spirit of our religion. I doubt not that the majority of the Abolitionists condemn the coarseness and violence of which I complain. But in this, as in most associations, the many are represented and controlled by the few, and are made to sanction and become responsible for what they disapprove.

One of their errors has been the adoption of "Immediate Emancipation" as their motto. To this they

Hosted by Google

owe not a little of their unpopularity. This phrase has contributed much to spread far and wide the belief, that they wished immediately to free the slave from all his restraints. They made explanations; but thousands heard the motto who never saw the explanation; and it is certainly unwise for a party to choose a watchword, which can be rescued from misapprehension only by labored explication. It may also be doubted, whether they ever removed the objection which their language so universally raised, whether they have not always recommended a precipitate action, inconsistent with the well-being of the slave and the order of the state.

Another objection to their movements is, that they have sought to accomplish their objects by a system of Agitation; that is, by a system of affiliated societies, gathered, and held together, and extended, by passionate eloquence. This, in truth, is the common mode by which all projects are now accomplished. The age of individual action is gone. Truth can hardly be heard unless shouted by a crowd. The weightiest argument for a doctrine is the number which adopts it. Accordingly, to gather and organize multitudes is the first care of him who would remove an abuse or spread a reform. That the expedient is in some cases useful, is not denied. But generally it is a showy, noisy mode of action, appealing to the passions, and driving men into exaggeration; and there are special reasons why such a mode should not be employed in regard to slavery; for slavery is so to be opposed as not to exasperate the slave, or endanger the community in which he lives. The Abolitionists might have formed an association; but it should have been an elective one. Men of strong moral principle, judiciousness, sobriety, should have

Hosted by Google

been carefully sought as members. Much good might have been accomplished by the coöperation of such philanthropists. Instead of this, the Abolitionists sent forth their orators, some of them transported with fiery zeal, to sound the alarm against slavery through the land, to gather together young and old, pupils from schools, females hardly arrived at years of discretion, the ignorant, the excitable, the impetuous, and to organize these into associations for the battle against oppression. They preached their doctrine to the colored people, and collected these into their societies. To this mixed and excitable multitude, appeals were made in the piercing tones of passion; and slave-holders were held up as monsters of cruelty and crime. Now to this procedure I must object, as unwise, as unfriendly to the spirit of Christianity, and as increasing, in a degree, the perils of the Slave-holding States. Among the unenlightened, whom they so powerfully addressed, was there no reason to fear that some might feel themselves called to subvert this system of wrong, by whatever means? From the free colored people this danger was particularly to be apprehended. It is easy for us to place ourselves in their situation. Suppose that millions of white men were enslaved, robbed of all their rights, in a neighbouring country, and enslaved by a black race, who had torn their ancestors from the shores on which our fathers had lived. How deeply should we feel their wrongs! And would it be wonderful, if, in a moment of passionate excitement, some enthusiast should think it his duty to use his communication with his injured brethren for stirring them up to revolt?

Such is the danger from Abolitionism to the Slave-holding States. I know no other. It is but justice

Hosted by Google

to add, that the principle of non-resistance, which the Abolitionists have connected with their passionate appeals, seems to have counteracted the peril. I know not a case in which a member of an anti-slavery society has been proved by legal investigation to have tampered with the slaves; and, after the strongly pronounced and unanimous opinion of the Free States on the subject, this danger may be considered as having passed away. Still a mode of action requiring these checks is open to strong objections, and ought to be abandoned. Happy will it be, if the disapprobation of friends, as well as of foes, should give to Abolitionsts a caution and moderation, which would secure the acquiescence of the judicious, and the sympathies of the friends of mankind! Let not a good cause find its chief obstruction in its defenders. Let the truth, and the whole truth, be spoken without paltering or fear; but so spoken as to convince, not inflame, as to give no alarm to the wise, and no needless exasperation to the selfish and passionate.

I know it is said, that nothing can be done but by excitement and vehemence; that the zeal which dares every thing is the only power to oppose to long-rooted abuses. But it is not true that God has committed the great work of reforming the world to passion. Love is a minister of good, only when it gives energy to the intellect, and allies itself with wisdom. The Abolitionists often speak of Luther's vehemence as a model to future reformers. But who, that has read history, does not know, that Luther's reformation was accompanied by tremendous miseries and crimes, and that its progress was soon arrested? And is there not reason to fear, that the fierce, bitter, persecuting spirit, which

Hosted by Google

he breathed into the work, not only tarnished its glory, but limited its power? One great principle, which we should lay down as immovably true, is, that, if a good work cannot be carried on by the calm, self-controlled, benevolent spirit of Christianity, then the time for doing it has not come. God asks not the aid of our vices. He can overrule them for good, but they are not the chosen instruments of human happiness.

We, indeed, need zeal, fervent zeal, such as will fear no man's power, and shrink before no man's frown, such as will sacrifice life to truth and freedom. But this energy of will ought to be joined with deliberate wisdom and universal charity. It ought to regard the whole, in its strenuous efforts for a part. Above all, it ought to ask first, not what means are most effectual, but what means are sanctioned by the Moral Law and by Christian Love. We ought to think much more of walking in the right path than of reaching our end. We should desire virtue more than success. If by one wrong deed we could accomplish the liberation of millions, and in no other way, we ought to feel that this good, for which, perhaps, we had prayed with an agony of desire, was denied us by God, was reserved for other times and other hands. The first object of a true zeal is, not that we may prosper, but that we may do right, that we may keep ourselves unspotted from every evil thought, word, and deed. Under the inspiration of such a zeal, we shall not find in the greatness of an enterprise an apology for intrigue or for violence. We shall not need immediate success to spur us to exertion. We shall not distrust God, because he does not yield to the cry of human impatience. We shall not forsake a good work, because it does not advance with a rapid step.

Hosted by Google

Faith in truth, virtue, and Almighty Goodness, will save us alike from rashness and despair.

In lamenting the adoption by the Abolitionists of the system of agitation or extensive excitement, I do not mean to condemn this mode of action as only evil. There are cases to which it is adapted; and, in general, the impulse which it gives is better than the selfish, sluggish indifference to good objects, into which the multitude so generally fall. But it must not supersede or be compared with Individual action. The enthusiasm of the Individual in a good cause is a mighty power. The forced, artificially excited enthusiasm of a multitude, kept together by an organization which makes them the instruments of a few leading minds, works superficially, and often injuriously. I fear that the native, noble-minded enthusiast often loses that single-heartedness which is his greatest power, when once he strives to avail himself of the machinery of associations. The chief strength of a Reformer lies in speaking truth purely from his own soul, without changing one tone for the purpose of managing or enlarging a party. Truth, to be powerful, must speak in her own words, and in no other's; must come forth, with the authority and spontaneous energy of inspiration, from the depths of the soul. It is the voice of the Individual giving utterance to the irrepressible convictions of his own thoroughly moved spirit, and not the shout of a crowd, which carries truth far into other souls, and insures it a stable empire on earth. For want of this, most which is now done is done superficially. The progress of society depends chiefly on the honest inquiry of the Individual into the particular work ordained him by God, and on his simplicity in following out his convictions. This

Hosted by Google

moral independence is mightier, as well as holier, than the practice of getting warm in crowds, and of waiting for an impulse from multitudes. The moment a man parts with moral independence; the moment he judges of duty, not from the inward voice, but from the interests and will of a party; the moment he commits himself to a leader or a body, and winks at evil, because division would hurt the cause; the moment he shakes off his particular responsibility, because he is but one of a thousand or million by whom the evil is done; that moment he parts with his moral power. He is shorn of the energy of single-hearted faith in the Right and the True. He hopes from man's policy what nothing but loyalty to God can accomplish. He substitutes coarse weapons forged by man's wisdom for celestial power.

The adoption of the common system of agitation by the Abolitionists has not been justified by success. From the beginning it created alarm in the considerate, and strengthened the sympathies of the Free States with the slave-holder. It made converts of a few individuals, but alienated multitudes. Its influence at the South has been almost wholly evil. It has stirred up bitter passions and a fierce fanaticism, which have shut every ear and every heart against its arguments and persuasions. These effects are more to be deplored, because the hope of freedom to the slave lies chiefly in the dispositions of his master. The Abolitionist proposed, indeed, to convert the slave-holders; and for this end he approached them with vituperation, and exhausted on them the vocabulary of reproach. And he has reaped as he sowed. His vehement pleadings for the slaves have been answered by wilder tones from the slave-

Hosted by Google

holder; and, what is worse, deliberate defences of slavery have been sent forth, in the spirit of the dark ages, and in defiance of the moral convictions and feelings of the Christian and civilized world. Thus, with good purposes, nothing seems to have been gained. Perhaps (though I am anxious to repel the thought) something has been lost to the cause of freedom and humanity.

I earnestly desire that Abolitionism may lay aside the form of public agitation, and seek its end by wiser and milder means. I desire as earnestly, and more earnestly, that it may not be put down by Lawless Force. There is a worse evil than Abolitionism, and that is the suppression of it by lawless force. No evil greater than this can exist in the state, and this is never needed. Be it granted, that it is the design, or direct, palpable tendency of Abolitionism to stir up insurrection at the South, and that no existing laws can meet the exigency. It is the solemn duty of the chief magistrate of the state to assemble immediately the legislative bodies, and their duty immediately to apply the remedy of Law. Let every friend of freedom, let every good man lift up his voice against mobs. Through these lies our road to tyranny. It is these which have spread the opinion, so common at the South, that the Free States cannot long sustain republican institutions. No man seems awake to their inconsistency with liberty. Our whole phraseology is in fault. Mobs call themselves, and are called, the People, when in truth they assail immediately the sovereignty of the People, when they involve the guilt of usurpation and rebellion against the People. It is the fundamental principle of our institutions, that the People is Sovereign. But by the People we mean not an individual here and there, not a knot of twenty or a

Hosted by Google

hundred or a thousand individuals in this or that spot, but the community formed into a body politic, and expressing and executing its will through regularly appointed organs. There is but one expression of the will or sovereignty of the People, and that is Law. Law is the voice, the living act, of the people. It has no other. When an individual suspends the operation of Law, resists its established ministers, and forcibly substitutes for it his own will, he is a usurper and rebel. The same guilt attaches to a combination of individuals. These, whether many or few, in forcibly superseding public law and establishing their own, rise up against the People, as truly as a single usurper. The People should assert its insulted majesty, its menaced sovereignty, in one case as decidedly as in the other. The difference between the mob and the individual is, that the usurpation of the latter has a permanence not easily given to the tumultuary movements of the former. The distinction is a weighty one. Little importance is due to sudden bursts of the populace, because they so soon pass away. But when mobs are organized, as in the French Revolution, or when they are deliberately resolved on and systematically resorted to, as the means of putting down an odious party, they lose this apology. A conspiracy exists against the Sovereignty of the People, and ought to be suppressed, as among the chief evils of the state.

In this part of the country our abhorrence of mobs is lessened by the fact, that they were thought to do good service in the beginning of the Revolution. They probably were useful then; and why? The work of that day was Revolution. To subvert a government was the fearful task to which our fathers thought themselves summoned. Their duty, tney believed, was In

Hosted by Google

surrection. In such a work mobs had their place. The government of the State was in the hands of its foes. The people could not use the regular organs of administration, for these were held and employed by the power which they wished to crush. Violent, irregular efforts belonged to that day of convulsion. To resist and subvert institutions is the very work of mobs; and when these institutions are popular, when their sole end is to express and execute the will of the people, then mobs are rebellion against the people, and as such should be understood and suppressed. A people is never more insulted than when a mob takes its name. Abolition must not be put down by lawless force. The attempt so to destroy it ought to fail. Such attempts place Abolitionism on a new ground. They make it, not the cause of a few enthusiasts, but the cause of freedom. They identify it with all our rights and popular institutions. If the Constitution and the laws cannot put it down, it must stand; and he who attempts its overthrow by lawless force is a rebel and usurper. The Supremacy of Law and the Sovereignty of the People are one and indivisible. To touch the one is to violate the other. This should be laid down as a first principle, an axiom, a fundamental article of faith which it must be heresy to question. A newspaper, which openly or by innuendoes excites a mob, should be regarded as sounding the tocsin of insurrection. On this subject the public mind slumbers, and needs to be awakened, lest it sleep the sleep of death.

How obvious is it, that pretexts for mobs will never be wanting, if this disorganizing mode of redressing evils be in any case allowed! We all recollect, that, when a recent attempt was made on the life of the

Hosted by Google

President of the United States, the cry broke forth from his friends, "that the assassin was instigated by the continual abuse poured forth on this distinguished man, and especially by the violent speeches uttered daily in the Senate of the United States." Suppose, now, that his adherents, to save the Chief Magistrate from murder, and to guard his constitutional advisers, had formed themselves into mobs, to scatter the meetings of his opponents. And suppose that they had resolved to put to silence the legislators, who, it was said, had abused their freedom of speech to blacken the character and put in peril the life of the Chief Magistrate. Would they not have had a better pretext than mobs against abolition? Was not assassination attempted? Had not the President received letters threatening his life, unless his measures were changed? Can a year or a month pass, which will not afford equally grave reasons for insurrections of the populace? A system of mobs and a free government cannot stand together. The men who incite the former, and especially those who organize them, are among the worst enemies of the state. Of their motives I do not speak. They may think themselves doing service to their country, for there is no limit to the delusions of the times. I speak only of the nature and tendency of their actions. They should be put down at once by law, and by the moral sentiment of an insulted people.

In addition to all other reasons, the honor of our nation, and the cause of free institutions, should plead with us to defend the laws from insult, and social order from subversion. The moral influence and reputation of our country are fast declining abroad. A letter, recently received from one of the most distinguished men

Hosted by Google

of the continent of Europe, expresses the universal feeling on the other side of the ocean. After speaking of the late encroachments on liberty in France, he says, "On your side of the Atlantic, you contribute, also, to put in peril the cause of liberty. We did take pleasure in thinking that there was at least in the New World a country, where liberty was well understood, where all rights were guarantied, where the people was proving itself wise and virtuous. For some time past, the news we receive from America is discouraging. In all your large cities we see mobs after mobs, and all directed to an odious purpose. When we speak of liberty, its enemies reply to us by *pointing to America.*" The persecuted Abolitionists have the sympathies of the civilized world. The country which persecutes them is covering itself with disgrace, and filling the hearts of the friends of freedom with fear and gloom. Already despotism is beginning to rejoice in the fulfilment of its prophecies, in our prostrated laws and dying liberties. Liberty is, indeed, threatened with death in a country, where any class of men are stripped with impunity of their constitutional rights. All rights feel the blow. A community, giving up any of its citizens to oppression and violence, is preparing for itself the same fate. It invites chains for itself, in suffering them to be imposed on any whom it is bound to protect.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

DUTIES.

A few words remain to be spoken in relation to the duties of the Free States. These need to feel the responsibilities and dangers of their present position. The country is approaching a crisis on the greatest question which can be proposed to it, a question not of profit or loss, of tariffs or banks, or any temporary interests, but a question involving the First Principles of freedom, morals, and religion. Yet who seems to be awake to the solemnity of the present moment? Who seems to be settling for himself the great fundamental truths, by which private efforts and public measures are to be determined

The North has duties to perform towards the South and towards itself. Let it resolve to perform them faithfully, impartially; asking first for the Right, and putting entire confidence in well-doing. The North is bound to frown on all attempts of its citizens, should such be threatened, to excite insurrection at the South, on all attempts to tamper with and to dispose to violence the minds of the slaves. The severest laws, which the Constitutions of the different States admit, may justly be resorted to for this end, and they should be strictly enforced. I believe, indeed, that there is no special

Hosted by Google

need for new legislation on the subject. I believe that there was never a moment, when the Slave-holding States had so little to apprehend from the Free, when the moral feeling of the community in regard to the crime of instigating revolt was so universal, thorough, and inflexible, as at the present moment. Still, if the South needs other demonstrations than it now has of the moral and friendly spirit which in this respect pervades the North, let them be given to the full extent which the spirit and provisions of our respective Constitutions allow. Still more; it is the duty of the Free States to act by opinion, where they cannot act by law, to discountenance a system of agitation on the subject of slavery, to frown on passionate appeals to the ignorant, and on indiscriminate and inflammatory vituperation of the slave-holder. This obligation, also, has been and will be fulfilled. There was never a stronger feeling of responsibility in this particular than at the present moment.

There are, however, other duties of the Free States, to which they *may* prove false, and which they are too willing to forget. They are bound, not in their public, but individual capacities, to use every virtuous influence for the abolition of slavery. They are bound to encourage that manly, moral, religious discussion of it, through which strength will be given to the continually increasing opinion of the civilized and Christian world in favor of personal freedom. They are bound to seek and hold the truth in regard to human rights, to be faithful to their principles in conversation and conduct, never, never to surrender them to private interest, convenience, flattery, or fear.

The duty of being true to our principles is not easily

Hosted by Google

to be performed. At this moment an immense pressure is driving the North from its true ground. God save it from imbecility, from treachery to freedom and virtue! I have certainly no feelings but those of good-will towards the South; but I speak the universal sentiment of this part of the country, when I say, that the tone which the South has often assumed towards the North has been that of a superior, a tone unconsciously borrowed from the habit of command to which it is unhappily accustomed by the form of its society. I must add, that this high bearing of the South has not always been met by a just consciousness of equality, a just self-respect at the North. The causes I will not try to explain. The effect, I fear, is not to be denied. It is said, that some, who have represented the North in Congress, have not always represented its dignity, its honor; that they have not always stood erect before the lofty bearing of the South. Here lies our danger. The North will undoubtedly be just to the South. It must also be just to itself. This is not the time for sycophancy, for servility, for compromise of principle, for forgetfulness of our rights. It is the time to manifest the spirit of Men, a spirit which prizes, more than life, the principles of liberty, of justice, of humanity, of pure morals, of pure religion.

Let it not be thought that I would recommend to the North, what in some parts of our country is called "Chivalry," a spirit of which the duelling pistol is the best emblem, and which settles controversies with blood. A Christian and civilized man cannot but be struck with the approach to barbarism, with the insensibility to true greatness, with the incapacity of comprehending the divine virtues of Jesus Christ, which mark what is called

Hosted by Google

"chivalry." I ask not the man of the North to borrow it from any part of the country. But I do ask him to stand in the presence of this "chivalry" with the dignity of moral courage and moral independence. Let him, at the same moment, remember the courtesy and deference due to the differing opinions of others, and the sincerity and firmness due to his own. Let him understand the lofty position which he holds on the subject of slavery, and never descend from it for the purpose of soothing prejudice or disarming passion. Let him respect the safety of the South, and still manifest his inflexible adherence to the cause of human rights and personal freedom.

On this point I must insist, because I see the North giving way to the vehemence of the South. In some, perhaps many, of our recent "Resolutions," a spirit has been manifested, at which, if not we, our children will blush. Not long ago there were rumors that some of our citizens wished to suppress by law all discussion, all expression of opinion on slavery, and to send to the South such members of our community as might be claimed as instigators of insurrection. Such encroachments on rights could not, of course, be endured. We are not yet so fallen. Some generous inspirations, some echoes of the old eloquence of liberty, still come down to us from our fathers. Could such encroachments be borne, would not the soil of New England, so long trodden by freemen, quake under the steps of her degenerate sons? We are not prepared for these. But a weak, yielding tone, for which we seem to be prepared, may be the beginning of concessions which we shall one day bitterly rue.

The means used at the South to bring the North

Hosted by Google

to compliance, seem to demand particular attention. I will not record the contemptuous language which has been thrown on the money-getting habits of New England, or the menaces which have been addressed to our cupidity, for the purpose of putting us to silence on the subject of slavery. Such language does in no degree move me. I only ask that we may give no ground for its application. We can easily bear it, if we do not deserve it. Our mother-country has been called a nation of shopkeepers, and New England ought not to be provoked by the name. Only let us give no sanction to the opinion that our spirit is narrowed to our shops; that we place the art of bargaining above all arts, all sciences, accomplishments, and virtues; that, rather than lose the fruits of the slave's labor, we would rivet his chains; that, sooner than lose a market, we would make shipwreck of honor; that, sooner than sacrifice present gain, we would break our faith to our fathers and our children, to our principles and our God. To resent or retaliate reproaches would be unwise and unchristian. The only revenge worthy of a good man is, to turn reproaches into admonitions against baseness, into incitements to a more generous virtue. New England has long suffered the imputation of a sordid, calculating spirit, of supreme devotion to gain. Let us show that we have principles, compared with which the wealth of the world is light as air. It is a common remark here, that there is not a community under heaven, through which there is so general a diffusion of intelligence and healthful moral sentiment as in New England. Let not the just influence of such a society be impaired by any act, which would give to prejudice the aspect of truth.

The Free States, it is to be feared, must pass through

Hosted by Google

a struggle. May they sustain it as becomes their freedom! The present excitement at the South can hardly be expected to pass away, without attempts to wrest from them unworthy concessions. The tone in regard to slavery in that part of our country is changed. It is not only more vehement, but more false than formerly. Once slavery was acknowledged as an evil. Now it is proclaimed to be a good. We have even been told, not by a handful of enthusiasts in private life, but by men in the highest station and of widest influence at the South, that slavery is the soil into which political freedom strikes its deepest roots, and that republican institutions are never so secure as when the laboring class is reduced to servitude. Certainly, no assertion of the wildest Abolitionist could give such a shock to the slaveholder, as this new doctrine is fitted to give to the people of the North. Liberty, with a slave for her pedestal and a chain in her hand, is an image, from which our understandings and hearts alike recoil. A doctrine, more wounding or insulting to the mechanics, farmers, laborers of the North than this strange heresy, cannot well be conceived. A doctrine more irreverent, more fatal to republican institutions, was never fabricated in the councils of despotism. It does not, however, provoke us. I recall it only to show the spirit in which slavery is upheld, and to remind the Free States of the calm energy which they will need, to keep themselves true to their own principles of liberty.

There is a great dread in this part of the country, that the union of the States may be dissolved by the conflict about slavery. To avert this evil, every sacrifice should be made but that of honor, freedom, and principle. No one prizes the Union more than myself.

Hosted by Google

Perhaps I may be allowed to say, that I am attached to it by no common love. Most men value the Union as a Means; to me it is an End. Most would preserve it for the prosperity of which it is the instrument; I love and would preserve it for its own sake. Some value it as favoring public improvements, facilities of commercial exchange, &c.; I value these improvements and exchanges chiefly as favoring union. I ask of the General Government to unite us, to hold us together as brethren in peace; and I care little whether it does any thing else. So dear to me is union. Next to liberty, it is our highest national interest. All the pecuniary sacrifices which it can possibly demand should be made for it. The politicians in some parts of our country, who are calculating its value, and are willing to surrender it because they may grow richer by separation, seem to me bereft of reason. Still, if the Union can be preserved only by the imposition of chains on speech and the press, by prohibition of discussion on a subject involving the most sacred rights and dearest interests of humanity, then union would be bought at too dear a rate; then it would be changed from a virtuous bond into a league of crime and shame. Language cannot easily do justice to our attachment to the Union. We will yield every thing to it but Truth, Honor, and Liberty. These we can never yield.

Let the Free States be firm, but also patient, forbearing, and calm. From the slave-holder they cannot look for perfect self-control. From his position he would be more than man, were he to observe the bounds of moderation. The consciousness which tranquillizes the mind can hardly be his. On this subject he has always been sensitive to excess. Much exasperation is

Hosted by Google

to be expected. Much should be borne. Every thing may be surrendered but our principles and our rights.

The work, which I proposed to myself, is now completed. I ask and hope for it the Divine blessing, as far as it expresses Truth, and breathes the spirit of Justice and Humanity. If I have written any thing under the influence of prejudice, passion, or unkindness to any human being, I ask forgiveness of God and man. I have spoken strongly, not to offend or give pain, but to produce in others deep convictions corresponding to my own. Nothing could have induced me to fix my thoughts on this painful subject, but a conviction, which pressed on me with increasing weight, that the times demanded a plain and free exposition of the truth. The few last months have increased my solicitude for the country. Public sentiment has seemed to me to be losing its healthfulness and vigor. I have seen symptoms of the decline of the old spirit of liberty. Servile opinions have seemed to gain ground among us. The faith of our fathers in free institutions has waxed faint, and is giving place to despair of human improvement. I have perceived a disposition to deride abstract rights, to speak of freedom as a dream, and of republican governments as built on sand. I have perceived a faint-heartedness in the cause of human rights. The condemnation, which has been passed on Abolitionists, has seemed to be settling into acquiescence in slavery. The sympathies of the community have been turned from the slave to the master. The impious doctrine, that human laws can repeal the Divine, can convert unjust and oppressive power into a moral right, has more and

Hosted by Google

more tinctured the style of conversation and the press. With these sad and solemn views of society, I could not be silent; and I thank God, amidst the consciousness of great weakness and imperfection, that I have been able to offer this humble tribute, this sincere though feeble testimony, this expression of heart-felt allegiance, to the cause of Freedom, Justice, and Humanity.

Having stated the circumstances which have moved me to write, I ought to say, that they do not discourage me. Were darker omens to gather round us, I should not despair. With a faith like his, who came to prepare the way for the Great Deliverer, I feel and can say, "The Kingdom of Heaven," the Reign of Justice and Disinterested Love, "is at hand, and All Flesh shall see the salvation of God." I know, and rejoice to know, that a power, mightier than the prejudices and oppression of ages, is working on earth for the world's redemption, the power of Christian Truth and Goodness. It descended from Heaven in the person of Christ. It was manifest in his life and death. From his cross it went forth conquering and to conquer. Its mission is, "to preach deliverance to the captive, and to set at liberty them that are bound." It has opened many a prison-door. It is ordained to break every chain. I have faith in its triumphs. I do not, cannot despair.

Hosted by Google

NOTE.

It was my purpose to address a chapter to the South, but I have thought fit to omit it. I beg, however, to say, that nothing which I have written can have proceeded from unkind feeling towards the South; for in no other part of the country have my writings found a more gratifying reception; from no other part have I received stronger expressions of sympathy. To these I am certainly not insensible. My own feelings, had I consulted them, would have led me to stifle every expression, which could give pain to those from whom I have received nothing but good-will.

I wished to suggest to the slave-holders that the excitement now prevalent among themselves is incomparably more perilous, more fitted to stir up insurrection, than all the efforts of Abolitionists, allowing these to be ever so corrupt. I also wished to remind the men of principle and influence in that part of the country, of the necessity of laying a check on lawless procedures, in regard to the citizens of the North. We have heard of large subscriptions at the South for the apprehension of some of the Abolitionists in the Free States, and for the transportation of them to parts of the country where they would meet the fate, which, it is said, they deserve. Undoubtedly, the respectable portion of the slave-holding communities are not answerable for these measures. But does not policy, as well as principle, require such men steadily to discountenance them? At present, the Free States have stronger sympathies with the South than ever

Hosted by Google

before. But can it be supposed that they will suffer their citizens to be stolen, exposed to violence, and murdered by other States? Would not such an outrage rouse them to feel and act as one man? Would it not identify the Abolitionists with our most sacred rights? One kidnapped, murdered Abolitionist would do more for the violent destruction of slavery than a thousand societies. His name would be sainted. The day of his death would be set apart for solemn, heart-stirring commemoration. His blood would cry through the land with a thrilling voice, would pierce every dwelling, and find a response in every heart. Do men, under the light of the present day, need to be told, that enthusiasm is not a flame to be quenched with blood? On this point, good and wise men, and the friends of the country at the North and South, can hold but one opinion; and if the press, which, I grieve to say, has kept an ominous silence amidst the violations of law and rights, would but speak plainly and strongly, the danger would be past.

The views and principles, supported in this short work, will, of course, provoke much opposition, and, what I greatly lament, they will excite the displeasure not only of the selfish and violent, but of good and honorable men, whose unfavorable position hardly admits an impartial judgment of slavery, and renders them excessively sensitive to every exposition of it. I shall not, however, be anxious to defend what I have written. The principles, here laid down, if true, will stand. I should anticipate little good from engaging in controversies with individuals. The selfish passions, awakened by such collisions, too often prevail over the love of truth; and without this, the truth cannot be worthily maintained. In regard to slavery, it is peculiarly important, that discussion should be calm, general, unmixed with personalities. In this way, I trust that the subject will be better understood by all

Hosted by Google

parties. I should rejoice to be convinced, that slavery is a less debasing influence than I have affirmed. How welcome would be brighter views of life and of mankind! Still, we must see things as they are, and not turn away from the most painful truth.

I have only to add, that I alone am responsible for what I have now written. I represent no society, no body of men, no part of the country. I have written by no one's instigation, and with no one's encouragement, but solely from my own convictions. If cause of offence is given, the blame ought to fall on me alone.

NOTE FOR THE FOURTH EDITION.

In commencing the chapter on Abolitionism, I have expressed my respect for the few Abolitionists whom I have known. I am bound to say, that, in consequence of hearing and seeing more of this body, I have an increasing persuasion of the purity of purpose, and the moral worth of its members generally. I have spoken freely of their errors; but these ought not to blind us to their virtues and sacrifices, and especially ought not to prejudice us against the truths which they contend for. We must not abandon great principles, because asserted unwisely. We must not grow cold to a good cause, because reproach is brought on it by defenders who have more zeal than discretion. Its dangers should attach us to it more closely, and we should do what we can to lead its friends to the use of means corresponding to its dignity, and fitted to insure its success.

In the chapter on the Means of removing Slavery, I have expressed my fears as to the result of the experi-

Hosted by Google

ment now going on in the English West Indies. I rejoice to say, that recent accounts from those islands have diminished my apprehensions. It is stated, that in some of the islands real estate has risen in value since the emancipation, and that imports are considerably increased. I have just heard, that a West Indian planter residing in this country, who was strenuously opposed to the Act of Emancipation, speaks now of his estate as more productive than formerly. That no disturbance of the peace has followed this great change, is well understood, and this is the essential point. Undoubtedly the experiment is not yet decided, and reports are to be received with caution; but the success of the measure has as yet surpassed the expectations of all except the Abolitionists. As yet they have proved the truest prophets. May events set the seal of truth on all their predictions! This country is interested in nothing more than in the success of emancipation in the West Indies. With this example before us, the destruction of slavery would be as speedy as it is sure.

No part of my book on Slavery seems to have given so much offence as that in which I have spoken of conjugal infidelity on the part of the master as increased by slavery. Of the abuse heaped on me for this opinion I shall, of course, say nothing. Had I received nothing but abuse, the remarks now to be made would not be offered to the public; but a gentleman of high character, Mr. Leigh of Virginia, has solemnly protested against my statement in the senate of the United States, and I should do him great wrong were I to confound him with the vulgar politicians, too common in Congress as well as out of it, who are ready to say any thing and every thing which may serve their cause. Mr. Leigh expresses his deliberate conviction, that conjugal fidelity is not more

Hosted by Google

respected in any part of the country than in the Slave-holding States. It will be observed, in recurring to my book, that I said nothing of the Slave-holding States, but of slave countries generally, and that I argued not from reports or documents, but from the principles of human nature and from the very nature of slavery. I feel as if such reasoning could not deceive me; but I will now say, what I forbore to say in the first instance, that I should not have brought this charge against slavery, had not the general argument, drawn from human nature, been corroborated by all the evidence which the case will well admit. In that part of my work, I expressed not my own opinion alone, but the common, and perhaps I should say the universal opinion of the North, and, still more, the public opinion of the civilized world. During my whole life, I have not met an individual, who has questioned, whether slavery exerts a disastrous influence on the domestic relations. I do not believe, that, among the well-informed at the North, an individual is to be found, who supposes that the obligations of marriage are as much respected in the Slave-holding States as in the Free. On reading Mr. Leigh's speech, I determined to make inquiries, with the purpose of retracting my error in the face of the world, if I should find reason to charge myself with rashness. I have obtained the opinions of those whose authority in such a case seems to me most worthy of confidence, and in every instance I have been assured that I have uttered only the truth. I know not how many have spoken to me on this point in the most undoubting tone. In my book, I have only given expression to the public sentiment of the North, and I as little expected to hear my correctness questioned, as to hear the existence of slavery denied. I do not, of course, intend to impute the least unfairness to Mr. Leigh, who is known among us only as a virtuous man, who does honor to his country

Hosted by Google

I presume, that, in the comparison which he made between the Slave-holding States and other parts of the country, he spoke without a sufficient knowledge of the latter. I cannot, therefore, I dare not, expunge from my book the offensive passage, though in the revised edition I have somewhat changed its form. If I know my own heart, I should rejoice to be able to expunge it.

I have regretted, that a passage, which I prepared for this work at the time of its composition, was not inserted. In the chapter of Explanations, after speaking of the examples of moral and religious excellence to be found in the Slave-holding States, I expressed, in a few sentences, my deep sense of the virtues, as well as the accomplishments of the women of the South. I wrote this passage with a fervent heart, because it was dictated, in a measure, by the grateful recollection of unwearied kindnesses received from woman during a residence in that part of the country in my youth. I should be glad to publish it now, had it not been destroyed with the manuscript of which it formed a part, for it expressed feelings which time has only strengthened. After much deliberation I omitted it in the first edition, and did so from considerations which I cannot now approve. I feared that what I had written would be set down by strangers as a common-place of flattery. I feared that I might seem desirous to expiate by this praise the censures contained in other parts of the book, desirous to shield myself from the obloquy to which I was exposing myself in publishing unpopular truth. I did on this occasion what I have too often done. In shrinking from the appearance of vices which I abhor, I was unjust to my convictions and affections. The reader will excuse this reference to myself, when he learns that I have been shamelessly accused of casting reproach on the purity of the women at the South. I should not, however, have noticed this calumny, had not the preceding

Hosted by Google

part of this note almost compelled me to refer to it. I feel too much about the great subject on which I have written, to be very solicitous about what is said of myself. I feel that I am nothing, that my reputation is nothing, in comparison with the fearful wrong and evil, which I have labored to expose; and I should count myself unworthy the name of a man or a Christian, if the calumnies of the bad, or even the disapprobation of the good, could fasten my thoughts on myself and turn me aside from a cause, which, as I believe, truth, humanity, and God call me to maintain.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

THE ABOLITIONISTS

A

LETTER TO JAMES G. BIRNEY

Hosted by Google

THE following letter was prepared for "The Philanthropist," an anti-slavery paper, published at Cincinnati, and edited by James G. Birney, — a gentleman, highly respected for his intellectual and moral endowments. It was occasioned by the attempt made in that city to suppress the anti-slavery party by force. Mr. Birney was driven from Cincinnati, and the press, at which "The Philanthropist" was printed, was broken up. A particular account of this disgraceful affair may be found in the "Narrative of the late riotous proceedings against the liberty of the press at Cincinnati," prepared by Mr. Birney and his associates. The following letter, besides appearing in "The Philanthropist," has been published as a pamphlet for distribution at the West, and the author now submits it to the community here in the same form, with a few slight changes, and with some new matter in a note.

BOSTON, *December* 20, 1836.

Hosted by Google

THE ABOLITIONISTS.

BOSTON, *Nov.* 1, 1836.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have not the pleasure of knowing you personally; but your history and writings have given me an interest in you, which induces and encourages me to address you with something of the freedom of acquaintance. I feel myself attracted to the friends of humanity and freedom, however distant; and when such are exposed by their principles to peril and loss, and stand firm in the evil day, I take pleasure in expressing to them my sympathy and admiration. The first accounts which reached me of the violence which drove you from Cincinnati, inclined me to write to you; but your "Narrative of those riotous proceedings," which I have lately received and read, does not permit me to remain longer silent. The subject weighs much on my mind. I feel that I have a duty to perform in relation to it, and I cannot rest till I yield to this conviction, till I obey what seems to me the voice of God. I think it best, however, not to confine myself to the outrage at Cincinnati, but to extend my remarks to the spirit of vio-

Hosted by Google

lence and persecution, which has broken out against the Abolitionists through the whole country. This, I know, will be more acceptable to you, than any expression of sympathy with you as an individual. You look beyond yourself to the cause which you have adopted, and to the much injured body of men, with whom you are associated.

It is not my purpose to speak of the Abolitionists as Abolitionists. They now stand before the world in another character, and to this I shall give my present attention. Of their merits and demerits as Abolitionists, I have formerly spoken. In my short work on Slavery, I have expressed my fervent attachment to the great end to which they are pledged, and at the same time my disapprobation, to a certain extent, of their spirit and measures. I have no disposition to travel over this ground again. Had the Abolitionists been left to pursue their object with the freedom which is guarantied to them by our civil institutions; had they been resisted only by those weapons of reason, rebuke, reprobation, which the laws allow, I should have no inducement to speak of them again either in praise or censure. But the violence of their adversaries has driven them to a new position. Abolitionism forms an era in our history, if we consider the means by which it has been opposed. Deliberate, systematic efforts have been made, not here or there, but far and wide, to wrest from its adherents that liberty of speech and the press, which our fathers asserted unto blood, and which our national and state governments are pledged to protect as our most sacred right. Its most conspicuous advocates have been hunted and stoned, its meetings scattered, its presses broken up, and nothing but the patience,

Hosted by Google

constancy, and intrepidity of its members, has saved it from extinction. The Abolitionists then not only appear in the character of champious of the colored race. In their persons the most sacred rights of the white man and the free man have been assailed. They are sufferers for the liberty of thought, speech, and the press; and, in maintaining this liberty amidst insult and violence, they deserve a place among its most honored defenders. In this character I shall now speak of them.

In regard to the methods adopted by the Abolitionists of promoting emancipation, I might find much to censure; but when I regard their firm, fearless assertion of the rights of free discussion, of speech and the press, I look on them with unmixed respect. I see nothing to blame, and much to admire. To them has been committed the most important bulwark of liberty, and they have acquitted themselves of the trust like men and Christians. No violence has driven them from their post. Whilst, in obedience to conscience, they have refrained from opposing force to force, they have still persevered amidst menace and insult, in bearing their testimony against wrong, in giving utterance to their deep convictions. Of such men, I do not hesitate to say, that they have rendered to freedom a more essential service, than any body of men among us. The defenders of freedom are not those, who claim and exercise rights which no one assails, or who win shouts of applause by well turned compliments to liberty in the days of her triumph. They are those, who stand up for rights which mobs, conspiracies, or single tyrants put in jeopardy; who contend for liberty in that particular form, which is threatened at the moment by the many

Hosted by Google

or the few. To the Abolitionists this honor belongs. The first systematic effort to strip the citizen of freedom of speech they have met with invincible resolution. From my heart I thank them. I am myself their debtor. I am not sure, that I should this moment write in safety, had they shrunk from the conflict, had they shut their lips, imposed silence on their presses, and hid themselves before their ferocious assailants. I know not where these outrages would have stopped, had they not met resistance from their first destined victims. The newspaper press, with a few exceptions, uttered no genuine indignant rebuke of the wrong-doers, but rather countenanced, by its gentle censures, the reign of Force. The mass of the people looked supinely on this new tyranny, under which a portion of their fellow-citizens seemed to be sinking. A tone of denunciation was beginning to proscribe *all* discussion of slavery; and had the spirit of violence, which selected associations as its first objects, succeeded in this preparatory enterprise, it might have been easily turned against any and every individual, who might presume to agitate the unwelcome subject. It is hard to say, to what outrage the fettered press of the country might not have been reconciled. I thank the Abolitionists, that in this evil day, they were true to the rights which the multitude were ready to betray. Their purpose to suffer, to die, rather than surrender their dearest liberties, taught the lawless, that they had a foe to contend with, whom it was not safe to press, whilst, like all manly appeals, it called forth reflection and sympathy in the better portion of the community. In the name of freedom and humanity, I thank them. Through their courage, the violence, which might have furnished a precedent fatal to free-

Hosted by Google

dom, is to become, I trust, a warning to the lawless, of the folly as well as crime of attempting to crush opinion by Force.

Of all powers, the last to be intrusted to the multitude of men, is that of determining what questions shall be discussed. The greatest truths are often the most unpopular and exasperating; and were they to be denied discussion, till the many should be ready to accept them, they would never establish themselves in the general mind. The progress of society depends on nothing more, than on the exposure of time-sanctioned abuses, which cannot be touched without offending multitudes, than on the promulgation of principles, which are in advance of public sentiment and practice, and which are consequently at war with the habits, prejudices, and immediate interests of large classes of the community. Of consequence, the multitude, if once allowed to dictate or proscribe subjects of discussion, would strike society with spiritual blindness, and death. The world is to be carried forward by truth, which at first offends, which wins its way by degrees, which the many hate and would rejoice to crush. The right of free discussion is therefore to be guarded by the friends of mankind, with peculiar jealousy. It is at once the most sacred, and most endangered of all our rights. He who would rob his neighbour of it, should have a mark set on him as the worst enemy of freedom.

I do not know that our history contains a page, more disgraceful to us as freemen, than that which records the violences against the Abolitionists. As a people, we are chargeable with other and worse misdeeds, but none so flagrantly opposed to the spirit of liberty, the very spirit of our institutions, and of which we make

Hosted by Google

our chief boast. Who, let me ask, are the men, whose offences are so aggravated, that they must be denied the protection of the laws, and be given up to the worst passions of the multitude? Are they profligate in principle and life, teachers of impious or servile doctrines, the enemies of God and their race? I speak not from vague rumor, but from better means of knowledge, when I say, that a body of men and women, more blameless than the Abolitionists in their various relations, or more disposed to adopt a rigid construction of the Christian precepts, cannot be found among us. Of their judiciousness and wisdom, I do not speak; but I believe they yield to no party in moral worth. Their great crime, and one, which in this land of liberty is to be punished above all crimes, is this, that they carry the doctrine of human equality to its full extent, that they plead vehemently for the oppressed, that they assail wrong-doing however sanctioned by opinion or intrenched behind wealth and power, that their zeal for human rights is without measure, that they associate themselves fervently with the Christians and philanthropists of other countries against the worst relic of barbarous times. Such is the offence, against which mobs are arrayed, and which is counted so flagrant, that a summary justice, too indignant to wait for the tardy progress of tribunals, must take the punishment into its own hands.

How strange in a free country, that the men, from whom the liberty of speech is to be torn, are those who use it in pleading for freedom, who devote themselves to the vindication of human rights! What a spectacle is presented to the world by a republic, in which sentence of proscription is passed on citizens, who labor, by addressing men's consciences, to enforce the truth,

Hosted by Google

that slavery is the greatest of wrongs! Through the civilized world, the best and greatest men are bearing joint witness against slavery. Christians of all denominations and conditions, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, are bound in a holy league against this most degrading form of oppression. But in free America, the language which despots tolerate, must not be heard. One would think, that freemen might be pardoned, if the view of fellow-creatures stripped of all human rights should move them to vehemence of speech. But, whilst, on all other subjects, the deeply stirred feelings may overflow in earnest remonstrance, on slavery the freemen must speak in whispers, or pay the penalty of persecution for the natural utterance of strong emotion.

I am aware, that the outrages on the Abolitionists are justified or palliated by various considerations; nor is this surprising; for when did violence ever want excuse? It is said, that Abolitionism tends to stir up insurrection at the South, and to dissolve the Union. Of all pretences for resorting to lawless force, the most dangerous is the *tendency* of measures or opinions. Almost all men see ruinous tendencies in whatever opposes their particular interests or views. All the political parties, which have convulsed our country, have seen tendencies to national destruction in the principles of their opponents. So infinite are the connexions and consequences of human affairs, that nothing can be done in which some dangerous tendency may not be detected. There is a tendency in arguments against any old establishment to unsettle all institutions, because all hang together. There is a tendency in the laying bare of deep-rooted abuses to throw a community into a storm. Liberty tends to licentiousness, government

Hosted by Google

to despotism. Exclude all enterprises which *may* have evil results, and human life will stagnate. Wise men are not easily deterred by difficulties and perils from a course of action, which promises great good. Especially when justice and humanity cry aloud for the removal of an enormous social evil, it is unworthy of men and Christians to let the imagination run riot among possible dangers, instead of rousing every energy of mind to study how the evil may be taken away, and the perils, which accompany beneficial changes, may be escaped.

As to the charge brought against the Abolitionists, of stirring up insurrection at the South, I have never met the shadow of a proof that this nefarious project was meditated by a single member of their body. The accusation is repelled by their characters and principles as well as by facts; nor can I easily conceive of a sane man giving it belief. As to the "tendency" of their measures to this result, it is such only as we have seen to belong to all human affairs, and such as may easily be guarded against. The truth is, that any exposition of Slavery, no matter from whom it may come, may chance to favor revolt. It may chance to fall into the hands of a fanatic, who may think himself summoned by Heaven to remove violently this great wrong; or it may happen to reach the hut of some intelligent daring slave, who may think himself called to be the avenger of his race. All things are possible. A casual, innocent remark in conversation, may put wild projects into the unbalanced or disordered mind of some hearer. Must we then live in perpetual silence? Do such chances make it our duty to shut our lips on the subject of an enormous wrong, and never to send from the

Hosted by Google

press a reprobation of the evil? The truth is, that the great danger to the slave-holder comes from slavery itself, from the silent innovations of time, from political conflicts and convulsions, and not from the writings of strangers. I readily grant that the Abolitionists, in consequence of their number and their systematic and public efforts, are more likely to be heard of by the slave, than a solitary individual who espouses his cause. But when I consider, how steadily they have condemned the resort to force on the part of the oppressed; when I consider what power the master possesses of excluding incendiary influences, if such are threatened from abroad; when I remember, that, during the late unparalleled excitement at the South, not a symptom of revolt appeared; and when to all this, I add the strongly manifested purpose of the Free States to put forth their power, if required, for the suppression of insurrection, it seems to me that none but the most delicate nerves can be disturbed by the movements of the Abolitionists. Can any man, who has a sense of character, affect to believe, that the tendency of Abolitionism to stir up a servile war, is so palpable and resistless as to require the immediate application of Force for its suppression, as to demand the substitution of mobs for the action of law, as to justify the violation of the most sacred right of the citizen?

As to the other charge, that the measures of the Abolitionists endanger our National Union, and must therefore be put down by any and every means, it is weaker than the former. Against whom has not this charge been hurled? What party among us has not been loaded with this reproach? Do not we at the North almost unanimously believe, that the spirit and

Hosted by Google

measures of Nullification have a direct and immediate tendency to dissolve the Union? But are we therefore authorized to silence the nullifier by violence? Should a leader of that party travel among us, is he to be mobbed? Let me farther ask, how is it, that the Abolitionists endanger the Union? The only reply, which I have heard, is, that they exasperate the South. And is it a crime to exasperate men? Who then so criminal as the Founder and primitive teachers of our faith? Have we yet to learn, that, in cases of exasperation, the blame is as apt to lie with those who take, as with those who occasion, offence? How strange the doctrine, that men are to be proscribed for uttering language which gives offence, are to be outlawed for putting their neighbours into a passion! Let it also be considered, that the Abolitionists are not the only people who exasperate the South. Can the calmest book be written on Slavery, without producing the same effect? Can the Chief Justice of Massachusetts expound the constitution and laws of that commonwealth according to their free spirit, and of course in opposition to Slavery, without awakening indignation? Is not the doctrine, that Congress has the right of putting an end to Slavery in the District of Columbia, denounced as fiercely as the writings and harangues of Abolitionists? Where then shall mobs stop, if the crime of exasperating the South is so heinous as to deserve their vengeance? If the philanthropist and Christian must be silenced on the subject of Slavery, lest they wound the sensitive ears of the South, ought the judge and legislator to be spared? Who does not see, that these apologies for lawless force, if they have any validity, will bring every good man under its iron sway?

Hosted by Google

In these remarks you learn my abhorrence of the violence offered to the Abolitionists, and my admiration of the spirit they have opposed to it. May they vindicate to the end the rights which in their persons have been outraged. Allow me now to express my earnest desire and hope, that the Abolitionists will maintain the liberty of speech and the press, not only by asserting it firmly, but by using it wisely, deliberately, generously, and under the control of the severest moral principle. It is my earnest desire, that they will exercise it in the spirit of Christians and philanthropists, with a supreme love of truth, without passion or bitterness, and without that fanaticism which cannot discern the true proportions of things, which exaggerates or distorts whatever favors or conflicts with its end, which sees no goodness except in its own ranks, which shuts itself up in one object and is blind to all besides. Liberty suffers from nothing more, than from licentiousness, and I fear that Abolitionists are not to be absolved from this abuse of it. It seems to me that they are particularly open to one reproach. Their writings have been blemished by a spirit of intolerance, sweeping censure, and rash, injurious judgment. I do not mean to bring this charge against all their publications. Yours, as far as I have seen them, are an honorable exception; and others, I know, deserve the same praise. But Abolitionism, in the main, has spoken in an intolerant tone, and in this way has repelled many good minds, given great advantage to its opponents, and diminished the energy and effect of its appeals. I should rejoice to see it purified from this stain.

Abolitionism seems to me to have been intolerant towards the slave-holders, and towards those in the Free

Hosted by Google

States who oppose them, or who refuse to take part in their measures. I say, first, towards the slave-holder. The Abolitionist has not spoken, and cannot speak, against slavery too strongly. No language can exceed the enormity of the wrong. But the whole class of slave-holders often meets a treatment in anti-slavery publications which is felt to be unjust, and is certainly unwise. We always injure ourselves, in placing our adversary on the footing of an injured man. One groundless charge helps him to repel many which are true. There is indeed a portion of slave-holders who deserve the severest reprobation. In every such community, there are many who hold their fellow-creatures in bondage for gain, for mere gain. They perpetuate this odious system not reluctantly, but from choice; not because the public safety compels them, as they think, to act the part of despots, but because they love despotism, and count money their supreme good. Provided they can be supported in ease and indulgence, can be pampered and enriched, they care not for the means. They care not what wrongs or stripes are inflicted, what sweat is extorted, what powers of the immortal soul are crushed. For such men no rebuke can be too severe. If any vehemence of language can pierce their consciences, let it be used. The man who holds slaves for gain is, in effect, though unconsciously, the worst of robbers; for he selfishly robs his fellow-creatures not only of their property, but of themselves. He is the worst of tyrants, for, whilst absolute governments spoil men of civil, he strips them of personal rights. But I do not, cannot believe, that the majority of slave-holders are of the character now described. I believe that the majority, could they be persuaded of the consistency of

Hosted by Google

emancipation with the well-being of the colored race and with social order, would relinquish their hold on the slave, and sacrifice their imagined property in him to the claims of justice and humanity. They shrink from emancipation, because it seems to them a precipice. Having seen the colored man continually dependent on foreign guidance and control, they think him incapable of providing for himself. Having seen the laboring class kept down by force, they feel as if the removal of this restraint would be a signal to universal lawlessness and crime. That such opinions absolve from all blame those who perpetuate slavery, I do not say. That they are often strengthened by the self-interest of the master, I cannot doubt; for we see men everywhere grasping and defending doctrines which confirm their property and power. I acknowledge, too, that the ready, unhesitating acquiescence of the slave-holder in such loose notions, especially at the present moment, is a bad symptom. In the present age, when a flood of light has been thrown on the evils of slavery, and when the whole civilized world cries out against it as the greatest of wrongs; and in this country, where the doctrine of human rights has been expounded by the profoundest minds, and sealed with the best blood, a fearful responsibility is assumed by masters, who, pronouncing emancipation hopeless, make no serious, anxious inquiry after the means of accomplishing it, and no serious effort to remove the supposed unfitness of the slave for freedom. Still, while there is much to be condemned in the prevalent opinions and feelings at the South, we have no warrant for denying to all slave-holders moral and religious excellence. The whole history of the

Hosted by Google

world shows us, that a culpable blindness in regard to one class of obligations may consist with a sincere reverence for religious and moral principles, as far as they are understood. In estimating men's characters, we must never forget the disadvantages under which they labor. Slavery, upheld, as it is at the South, by the deepest prejudices of education, by the sanction of laws, by the prescription of ages, and by real difficulties attending emancipation, cannot easily be viewed in that region as it appears to more distant and impartial observers. The hatefulness of the system ought to be strongly exposed, and it cannot be exposed too strongly; but this hatefulness must not be attached to all who sustain slavery. There are pure and generous spirits at the South, and they are to be honored the more for the sore trials amidst which their virtues have gained strength. The Abolitionists, in their zeal, seem to have overlooked these truths in a great degree, and by their intolerance towards the slave-holder, have awakened towards him sympathy rather than indignation, and weakened the effect of their just invectives against the system which he upholds.

I think, too, that they are chargeable with a like intolerance towards those in the Free States, who oppose them, or who refuse to participate in their operations. They have been apt to set down opposition to themselves as equivalent to attachment to slavery. Regarding their own dogmas as the only true faith, and making their own zeal the standard of a true interest in the oppressed, they have been apt to cast scornful looks and reproaches on those who have spoken in doubt or displeasure of their movements. This has made them

Hosted by Google

many foes. They have been too belligerent to make friends. I do not mean in these remarks, that the Abolitionists have had nothing to blame in their opponents. Among these, are not a few deserving severe reprehension, and I have no desire to shield them from it. But the great mass, who have refused to take part in the anti-slavery movement, have been governed by pure motives. If they have erred, they have not erred willingly, or from the influence of low and servile passions. They have consequently been wronged by the treatment they have received at the hands of the Abolitionists, and men are not brought over by wrongs to a good cause.

I have said that I have no desire to shield the unworthy among ourselves. We have those, whose opposition to Abolitionism has been wicked, and merits reprobation. Such are to be found in all classes, forming indeed a minority in each, yet numerous enough to deserve attention and to do much harm. Such are to be found in what is called the highest class of society, that is, among the rich and fashionable; and the cause is obvious. The rich and fashionable belong to the same caste with the slave-holder; and men are apt to sympathize with their own caste more readily than with those beneath them. The slave is too low, too vulgar, to awaken interest in those, who abhor vulgarity more than oppression and crime, and who found all their self-admiration on the rank they occupy in the social scale. Far be it from me to charge on the rich or fashionable, as a class, this moral degradation; but among them are the worshippers of high degree, who would think their dignity soiled, by touching the cause of a menial, de-

Hosted by Google

graded race, and who load its advocates with ridicule and scorn.

Then, in the commercial class, there are unworthy opposers of Abolitionism. There are those, whose interests rouse them to withstand every movement, which may offend the South. They have profitable connexions with the slave-holder, which must not be endangered by expressions of sympathy with the slave. Gain is their god, and they sacrifice on this altar without compunction the rights and happiness of their fellow-creatures. To such, the philanthropy, which would break every chain, is fanaticism, or a pretence. Nothing in their own souls helps them to comprehend the fervor of men, who feel for the wronged, and who hazard property and life in exposing the wrong. Your "Narrative of the Riotous Proceedings at Cincinnati," shows to what a fearful extent the spirit of humanity, justice, and freedom may be supplanted by the accursed lust of gain. This, however, cannot surprise us. Our present civilization is characterized and tainted by a devouring greediness of wealth; and a cause, which asserts right against wealth, must stir up bitter opposition, especially in cities where this divinity is most adored. Every large city will furnish those, who would sooner rivet the chain on the slave than lose a commission, or retrench an expenditure. I would on no account intimate, that such men constitute the majority of the commercial class. I rejoice to know that a more honorable spirit prevails in the community which falls more immediately under my notice. Still, the passion for gain is everywhere sapping pure and generous feeling, and everywhere raises up bitter foes against any reform

Hosted by Google

which may threaten to turn aside a stream of wealth. I sometimes feel as if a great social revolution were necessary to break up our present mercenary civilization, in order that Christianity, now repelled by the almost universal worldliness, may come into new contact with the soul, and may reconstruct society after its own pure and disinterested principles.

In another class, which contains many excellent people, may also be found unworthy opposers of all anti-slavery movements. I refer to the Conservative class, to those who are tremblingly alive to the spirit of innovation now abroad in the world, who have little or no faith in human progress, who are anxious to secure what is now gained rather than to gain more, to whom that watchword of the times, Reform, sounds like a knell. Among these are to be found individuals, who, from no benevolent interest in society, but simply because they have drawn high prizes in the lottery of life, are unwilling that the most enormous abuses should be touched, lest the established order of things, so propitious to themselves, should be disturbed. A palsying, petrifying order, keeping things as they are, seems to them the Ideal of a perfect community, and they have no patience with the rude cry of reformers for the restoration of human beings to their long-lost rights.

I will only add the politicians, as another class, which has furnished selfish assailants of Abolitionism. Among our politicians are men, who regard public life as a charmed circle into which moral principle must not enter, who know no law but expediency, who are prepared to kiss the feet of the South for southern votes, and who stand ready to echo all the vituperations of the slave-

Hosted by Google

holder against the active enemies of slavery in the Free States.

For these various descriptions of selfish opponents of Abolitionism, I make no apology. Let them be visited with just rebuke. But they, after all, form but a small part of that great body in the Free States, who look on the present anti-slavery movement with distrust and disapprobation. The vast majority in the Free States, who refuse communion with you, are not actuated by base considerations. The fear of a servile war, the fear of political convulsions, a perception of the difficulties of great social changes, self-distrust, a dread of rashness, these, and the like motives, have great influence in deterring multitudes from giving their countenance to what seem to them violent movements for the abolition of slavery. That a culpable insensibility to the evils and wrongs of this nefarious institution is too common in the class of which I now speak, I do not mean to deny. Still, how vast a proportion of the intelligence, virtue, and piety of the country is to be found in their ranks! To speak of them slightly, contemptuously, bitterly, is to do great wrong, and such speaking, I fear, has brought much reproach on Abolitionism.

The motives which have induced me to make this long communication to you will not, I trust, be misunderstood. I earnestly desire, my dear Sir, that you and your associates will hold fast the right of free discussion by speech and the press, and, at the same time, that you will exercise it as Christians, and as friends of your race. That you, Sir, will not fail in these duties, I rejoice to believe. Accept my humble tribute of respect and admiration for your disinterestedness, for

Hosted by Google

your faithfulness to your convictions, under the peculiar sacrifices to which you have been called. It is my prayer, that, by calm, fearless perseverance in well-doing, you may guide and incite many to a like virtue.

It may be said, that it is easy for one, living, as I do, at a distance from danger, living in prosperity and ease, to preach exposure and suffering to you and your friends. I can only say in reply, that I lay down no rule for others, which I do not feel to be binding on myself. What I should do in the hour of peril may be uncertain; but what I ought to do is plain. What I desire to do, is known to the Searcher of all hearts. It is my earnest desire, that prosperity may not unnerve me, that no suffering may shake my constancy in a cause which my heart approves. I sometimes indeed fear for myself, when I think of untried persecutions. I know not what weaknesses the presence of great danger may call forth. But in my most deliberate moments, I see nothing worth living for, but the divine virtue which endures and surrenders all things for truth, duty, and mankind. I look on reproach, poverty, persecution, and death, as light evils compared with unfaithfulness to pure and generous principles, to the spirit of Christ, and to the will of God. With these impressions, I ought not to be deterred by self-distrust, or by my distance from danger, from summoning and cheering others to conflict with evil. Christianity, as I regard it, is designed throughout to fortify us for this warfare. Its great lesson is self-sacrifice. Its distinguishing spirit is Divine Philanthropy suffering on the cross. The Cross, the Cross, this is the badge and standard of our religion. I honor all who bear it. I look with scorn on the self

Hosted by Google

ish greatness of this world, and with pity on the most gifted and prosperous in the struggle for office and power; but I look with reverence on the obscurest man, who suffers for the right, who is true to a good but persecuted cause.

With these sentiments, I subscribe myself your sincere friend,

WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

Hosted by Google

NOTE.

As the preceding letter was prepared for a newspaper, I was obliged, by the narrowness of my limits, to pass over some topics, on which I should have been glad to offer a few remarks. — In expressing my conviction of the moral worth of the Abolitionists, I wished to say, that they are in danger, as a body, of forfeiting this praise. Let them gather numbers and strength, and they may be expected to degenerate. The danger is greater, now that they have begun to add the ballot-box, or political action, to their other modes of operation. It is one of the evils attending associations and an argument against them, that, by growing popular, they attract to themselves unworthy members, lose their original simplicity of purpose, become aspiring, and fall more and more under the control of popular leaders. Intriguers will never be wanting to press them, if possible, into the service of one or another of the great parties which divide the country, and by becoming political machines, they only increase the confusion of public affairs.

I have spoken in the letter, of "the fettered press" of the country, a subject of much moral interest. The newspaper press is fettered among us by its dependence on subscribers, among whom there are not a few intolerant enough to withdraw their patronage, if an editor give publicity to articles which contradict their cherished opinions, or shock their party prejudices, or seem to clash with their interests. In such a state of things, few newspapers can be expected to afford to an unpopular in-

Hosted by Google

dividual or party, however philanthropic or irreproachable, an opportunity of being heard by the public. Editors engage in their vocation like other men, for a support; and communications, which will thin their subscription-lists, will of course find little favor at their hands. Much reproach is sometimes thrown on them for their want of moral independence; but the root of the evil lies in the intolerance of the community. One result of this state of things is, that the newspaper press fails of one of its chief duties, which is to stem corrupt opinion, to stay the excesses of popular passions. It generally swells, seldom arrests, the violence of the multitude. The very subjects, on which the public mind may most need to be reformed, are most likely to be excluded from its columns. Another evil result is, the increase of the number and violence of parties. Conscientious men, who cannot obtain a hearing through the common newspapers, are compelled to league for the support of papers of their own, and, in speaking through these organs, they are tempted to an extravagance and bitterness which they would have shunned, had they used other vehicles. It may be doubted, whether Abolitionism would have taken the form of organized and affiliated societies, if the subject of slavery could have been discussed in the common papers with the same freedom as other topics. That Abolitionism has owed not a little of its asperity to its having been proscribed from the beginning, and to its having been denied the common modes of addressing the public mind, I cannot doubt. Toleration seems to be the last virtue which individuals or communities learn. One would think, that experience had sufficiently taught men, that persecution is not the way to put down opinions. The selfish may indeed be disheartened by opposition; but conscientious men are strengthened by it in their convictions. Persecution drives and knits them together; and when formed into a

Hosted by Google

party by this bond, their zeal becomes more intense, their prejudices more inveterate, their opinions more extravagant, their means more violent, than if they had continued to be scattered through the community. If Abolitionism should convulse the country, as some seem to fear, a large share of the blame will belong to that intolerance, which has heaped on the most respectable men every epithet of scorn and vituperation, and has driven them to assume a separate and belligerent attitude in the community.

I cannot easily conceive of a greater good to a city, than the establishment of a newspaper by men of superior ability and moral independence, who should judge all parties and public measures by the standard of the Christian law, who should uncompromisingly speak the truth and adhere to the Right, who should make it their steady aim to form a just and lofty public sentiment, and who should at the same time give to upright and honorable men an opportunity of making known their opinions on matters of general interest, however opposed to the opinions and passions of the day. In the present stage of society, when newspapers form the reading of all classes, and the chief reading of multitudes, the importance of the daily press cannot be overrated. It is one of the mightiest instruments at work among us. It may and should take rank among the most effectual means of social order and improvement. It is a power, which should be wielded by the best minds in the community. The office of editor is one of solemn responsibility, and the community should encourage the most gifted and virtuous men to assume it, by liberally recompensing their labor, and by according to them that freedom of thought and speech, without which no mind puts forth all its vigor, and which the highest minds rank among their dearest rights and blessings.

Hosted by Google

In speaking of the unworthy opponents of Abolitionism in the preceding letter, I proposed to say something of those unhappy men, who, in one part of our country, have proclaimed Slavery to be a good, a domestic blessing, and an essential support or condition of free institutions. But I felt that I could not easily speak on this point in measured terms; and in such cases I prefer silence, unless a clear conviction of duty forbids it. Happily this detestable doctrine needs no effort to expose it; for it carries its refutation in its own absurdity, and in its repugnance to all moral and religious feeling. The Southern States would be grievously wronged by being made responsible for this insane estimate of Slavery. It is confined, I trust, to a small number, who have been hardy enough to set at defiance the judgment of the Christian and civilized world, and whom nothing but oblivion can screen from that condemning sentence, which future times will pass more and more sternly on the advocates of oppression, on the foes of freedom and human rights.

Hosted by Google

A

LETTER TO THE HON. HENRY CLAY,

ON

THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS

TO

THE UNITED STATES.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

ON

THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS

TO THE UNITED STATES.

My Dear Sir,

I trust that you will excuse the liberty which I take in thus publicly addressing you. If you could look into my heart, I am sure you would not condemn me. You would discover the motives of this act, in my respect for your eminent powers, and in my confidence that you are disposed to use them for the honor and happiness of your country. Were you less distinguished, or less worthy of distinction, I should not trouble you with this letter. I write you, because I am persuaded, that your great influence, if exerted in promoting just views on the subject of this communication, would accomplish a good, to which, perhaps, no other man in the country is equal. I am bound, in frankness, to add another reason for addressing you. I hope that your name, prefixed to this letter, may secure to it an access to some, perhaps to many, who would turn away, were its thoughts presented in a more general form. Perhaps by this aid it may scale the barrier, which now excludes

Hosted by Google

from the South a certain class of the writings of the North. I am sure your hospitality would welcome me to Kentucky; and your well-known generosity, I believe, will consent that I should use your name, to gain a hearing in that and the neighbouring States.

It is with great reluctance that I enter on the topic of this letter. My tastes and habits incline me to very different objects of thought and exertion. I had hoped, that I should never again feel myself called to take part in the agitations and exciting discussions of the day, especially in those of a political character. I desire nothing so much as to devote what remains of life to the study and exposition of great principles and universal truths. But the subject of Texas weighs heavily on my mind, and I cannot shake it off. To me, it is more than a political question. It belongs eminently to morals and religion. I have hoped, that the attention of the public would be called to it by some more powerful voice. I have postponed writing, until the national legislature is about to commence the important session, in which, it is thought, this subject may be decided. But no one speaks, and therefore I cannot be silent. Should Texas be annexed to our country, I feel that I could not forgive myself, if, with my deep, solemn impressions, I should do nothing to avert the evil. I cannot easily believe, that this disastrous measure is to be adopted, especially at the present moment. The annexation of Texas, under existing circumstances, would be more than rashness; it would be madness. That opposition to it must exist at the South, as well as at the North, I cannot doubt. Still, there is a general impression, that great efforts will be made to accomplish this object at the approaching session of Congress, and

Hosted by Google

that nothing but strenuous resistance can prevent their success. I must write, therefore, as if the danger were real and imminent; and if any should think that I am betrayed into undue earnestness by a false alarm, they will remember that there are circumstances, in which excess of vigilance is a virtue.

In the course of this discussion, I shall be forced to speak on one topic, which can hardly be treated so as to give no offence. I am satisfied that in this, as in all cases, it is best, safest, as well as most right and honorable, to speak freely and plainly. Nothing is to be gained by caution, circumlocution, plausible softenings of language, and other arts, which, in destroying confidence, defeat their own end. In discussions of an irritating nature, the true way of doing good is, to purify ourselves from all unworthy motives, to cherish disinterested sentiments and unaffected good-will towards those from whom we differ, and then to leave the mind to utter itself naturally and spontaneously. How far I have prepared myself for my work, by this self-purification, it becomes not me to say; but this I may say, that I am not conscious of the slightest asperity of feeling towards any party or any individual. I have no private interests to serve, no private passions to gratify. The strength of my conviction may be expressed in strong, perhaps unguarded language; but this want of caution is the result of the consciousness, that I have no purpose or feeling which I need conceal.

I shall, in one respect, depart from the freedom of a letter. I shall arrange my thoughts under distinct heads; and I shall do this, because I wish to put my reader in full possession of my views. I wish to use no vague declamation, to spread no vague alarm, but to bring out

Hosted by Google

as clearly as possible the precise points of objection to the measure I oppose.*

I. We have a strong argument against annexing Texas to the United States, in the Criminality of the revolt which threatens to sever that country from Mexico. On this point our citizens need light. The Texan insurrection is seriously regarded by many among us as a struggle of the oppressed for freedom. The Texan revolution is thought to resemble our own. Our own is contaminated by being brought into such relationship, and we owe to our fathers and ourselves a disclaimer of affinity with this new republic. The Texan revolt, if regarded in its causes and its means of success, is

* It may be well to state the principal authorities on which I rely for the statements in this letter. I am most indebted, perhaps, to an article on Mexico and Texas, in the July number of the North American Review for the year 1836. This article, as I understood at the time, was written by an enlightened and respected citizen of the South. The quotations in the first head of this letter, without a marginal reference, are taken from this tract, with a few unimportant exceptions. I have also made use of a pamphlet, bearing the title of the "War in Texas," written by Mr. Benjamin Lundy, a man of unimpeachable character, and who professes to have given particular attention to the subject. With his reasonings and opinions, I have nothing to do; but his statement of facts has been represented to me as worthy of full credit. I have also consulted a "History of Texas, by David B. Edwards." I know not that this has furnished me any thing of importance. But, by its undesigned coincidence, it corroborates the preceding articles. My chief reliance, however, is not on books, but on the notoriety of the facts here given, which may be considered as a testimony borne to them by the whole people. This is a singularly unexceptionable testimony in the present case; because it is well known, that the advocates of the Texan revolt have had possession, to a great degree, of the press of the country, and unfavorable accounts could not have obtained general currency, without a foundation in truth. Let me add, that by "the North," I understand in this letter all the Free States, and by "the South," all the Slave-holding States except where the terms are plainly restricted by the connexion.

Hosted by Google

criminal; and we ought in no way to become partakers in its guilt. You, I doubt not, are familiar with its history; but for the benefit of some, into whose hands this letter may fall, I will give the leading facts.

The first grant of land in Texas to our citizens was made under the Royal Government; and, in accepting it, the obligation was expressly incurred, of submission to the civil and religious despotism which then crushed the country. It was understood, that the settlers were to adopt the Catholic faith, and to conform in all other respects to the institutions of Mexico. Under the revolutionary governments, which succeeded the fall of the Spanish power, the original grant was confirmed, and new ones made, on condition of subjection to the laws of the land. The terms were very liberal, except that adherence to the Catholic religion was required as the condition of settlement. These facts will help us to understand the reasonableness of some of the complaints, under which the colonists seek to shelter their revolt.

Mexico, on declaring her independence on the mother country, established a republican government, and was unfortunately betrayed by her admiration of this country into the adoption of a Federal system, for which no foundation had been laid in her previous history. From this cause, added to her inexperience in self-government, and to the want of intelligence among the mass of her population, her institutions have yielded very imperfectly the fruits of freedom. The country has been rent by factions, the capital convulsed by revolutions, and the chief office of the state been secured by the military to popular chieftains. The emigrants from this country to Texas went with open eyes, with full knowledge of the

Hosted by Google

unsettled state of affairs, into this region of misrule and agitation. Happily their distance from the seat of government prevented their being drawn into the whirlpool of civil contests, which threatened at times the destruction of the metropolis. Whilst the city of Mexico was pillaged or laid under martial law, Texas found security in her remoteness; and, had her colonists proved loyal citizens, this security might have been undisturbed.

Complaints of one another soon sprung up between the General Government and Texas. Mexico complained of the gross infraction of her laws, and Texas of the violence of the means by which it was attempted to enforce them. That both parties had ground of reproach, we cannot doubt; nor is it easy to strike the balance between them, or to say where the chief blame lies. The presumption is strong, that the fault began with the colonists. We of this country, receiving our accounts of the controversy from Texans, are in danger of being warped in our judgments. But we have for our guidance our knowledge of human nature, which helps us to construe the testimony of interested witnesses, and which, in the present case, cannot easily deceive us. If we consider the distance of Texas from the seat of government, her scattered population, her vicinity to a slave country, the general character of the first settlers in a wilderness, and the difficulty of subjecting them to regular tribunals; can we doubt, for a moment, that Mexico had cause for the complaints, which she urged, of the gross infractions and evasions of her laws in Texas, especially of the laws relating to revenue, and to the exclusion of slaves? On the other hand, if we consider the circumstances of Mexico, can we doubt, that the military force sent by her to Texas, and needed there

Hosted by Google

to enforce the laws, abused its power more or less? That lawless men should be put down by lawless means, especially in a country swept by the spirit of revolution, is an effect too common and natural to excite wonder. The wonder is, that Texas escaped with so little injury. Whether she would have suffered at all, had she submitted in good faith to the laws which she had pledged herself to obey, may be fairly questioned. I ask you, Sir, whether it is not your deliberate conviction, that Mexico, from the beginning of her connexion with the colonists, has been more sinned against than sinning. But allowing that the violent means, used by Mexico for enforcing her authority, were less provoked than we believe them to have been; did not the Texans enter the country with a full knowledge of its condition? Did they not become citizens of a state, just escaped from a grinding despotism, just entered into the school of freedom, which had been inured for ages to abuses of military power, and whose short republican history had been made up of civil agitation? In swearing allegiance to such a state, did they not consent to take their chance of the evils, through which it must have been expected to pass in its way to firm and free institutions? Was there, or could there be in so unsettled a society, that deliberate, settled, inflexible purpose of spoiling the colonists of their rights, which alone absolves a violation of allegiance from the guilt of treason?

Some of the grounds, on which the Texans justify their conflict for independence, are so glaringly deficient in truth and reason, that it is hard to avoid suspicion of every defence set up for their revolt. They complain of being denied the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences; and this they do,

Hosted by Google

though they entered the country and swore allegiance to its government, with full knowledge that the Catholic religion was the religion of the state and alone tolerated by the constitution. What increases the hollowness and criminality of the pretence is, that notwithstanding the provision of the constitution, Protestant sects had held their meetings undisturbed in Texas, and no persecution had ever taken place on account of difference of creed.

Another grievance by which they justify their revolt is, that the trial by jury had been withheld; and this complaint they have the courage to make, although they were fully aware, before becoming the adopted citizens of the country, that this mode of trial was utterly unknown to its jurisprudence, and though, in the constitution of the State of Coahuila and Texas, the following article had been introduced: "One of the principal subjects for the attention of Congress [State Legislature] shall be to establish in criminal cases the trial by jury, extending it gradually, and even adopting it in civil cases, in proportion as the advantages of this precious institution may be practically developed."

One of the greatest grievances in the eyes of Texas, was the change of the Mexican government from a Federal to a Central or Consolidated form. But this change, however violently brought about, was ratified by the national Congress according to the rules prescribed by the constitution, and was sanctioned by the Mexican people. The decree of Congress, introducing this "reform" of the national institutions, declares the system of government "republican, popular, and representative," and provides all the organs by which such a government is characterized. What also deserves our consideration,

Hosted by Google

in estimating this measure, is, that the whole history of Mexico has proved the necessity of substituting a Central for a Federal government. Liberty and order can be reconciled and preserved to that country by no process but by the introduction of more simple and efficient institutions. And yet the Texans, a handful of strangers, raised the standard of revolt, because the government was changed by a nation of nine millions without their consent.

I have spoken of the Texans as a handful of people. At the breaking out of the insurrection they were about twenty thousand, including women and children. They were, of course, wholly unable to achieve or maintain national independence; so that one condition which is required to authorize revolution, namely, the ability to sustain a government, to perform the duties of sovereignty, they could not pretend to fulfil. Twenty thousand men, women, and children, raising the standard of war, and proposing to dismember a mighty empire! It is very possible that there are suburbs of London containing an equal number of discontented people, who suffer under and have reason to complain of municipal or national injustice. And may these fly to arms, set up for a nation, and strive to break the unity of the British dominions? It should also be remembered, that the Texans were not only a drop of the bucket compared with the Mexican population, but that they were a decided minority in the particular State to which they belonged; so that their revolt may be compared to the rising of a county in Massachusetts or Virginia for the purpose of establishing a separate sovereignty, on the ground of some real or imagined violation of right on the part of the Federal or the State govern-

Hosted by Google

ment. Still more, this little knot of Texans were far from being unanimous as to the revolt. The older and wealthier inhabitants favored peace. "There were great differences of opinion among the colonists, and even violent party dissensions. Many, who were in the quiet enjoyment of their property, were opposed to all these hostile movements. The first public declaration of independence was adopted, not by persons assuming to act in a representative capacity, but by about *ninety individuals*, all, except two, Americans, if we may judge by their names, acting for themselves, and recommending a similar course to their fellow-citizens. That declaration furnishes proofs of the dissensions and jealousies of which we have spoken. — It proves another fact, that the ancient population of the province was favorable to the new views of the government of Mexico." In some letters written by Colonel S. T. Austin, the founder of the colony, in the year 1834, whilst imprisoned in Mexico on the charge of encouraging revolutionary movements in Texas, we have some remarkable passages, showing the aversion of the sounder part of the population to violent measures. "I wish my friends and all Texas to adopt and firmly adhere to the motto and rule I have stated in this letter. The rule is, to discountenance, in the most unequivocal and efficient manner, all persons who are in the habit of speaking or writing in violent or disrespectful terms of the Mexican people or authorities. — I have been led into so much difficulty, and Texas has been so much jeopardized in its true and permanent interests, by inflammatory men, political fanatics, political adventurers, would-be-great men, vain talkers, and visionary fools, that I begin to lose all confidence except for

Hosted by Google

those who seek their living between the plough-handles; and, alas for them! they are too often sacrificed before they know it.—Tolerate no more violent measures, and you will prosper, and obtain from the government all that reasonable men ought to ask for."* It is very plain, that, of this diminutive colony, the more reasonable men, had they not been overborne by the more violent, would have averted the civil war. Such was the number which set up for a nation!

I have no disposition to deny that Texas had grievances to justify complaint. In proof of this I need no documents. That she was not always wisely governed, that her rights were not always respected, who can doubt? What else could be expected? Mexico is not wise. Mexico is not skilled in the science of human rights. Her civilization is very imperfect, as we and the Texans have always known; and a good government is one of the slowest fruits of civilization. In truth a good government exists nowhere. The errors and vices of rulers entail evils on every state. Especially in an extensive community, some districts will always suffer from unwise, partial, unjust legislation. If every town or county may start up into a sovereign state, whenever it is wronged, society will be given up to perpetual convulsion, and history be one bloody record of revolt. The right of insurrection is to be exercised most rarely, fearfully, reluctantly, and only in cases of fixed, pronounced, persevering oppression, from which no relief can he found but in force. Nothing is easier than for any and every people to draw up a list of wrongs; nothing more ruinous than to rebel because

* History of Texas, p. 210, Austin's Correspondence.

Hosted by Google

every claim is not treated with respect. The United States did not throw off the British yoke, because every human right, which could be demonstrated by moral science, was not granted them; but because they were denied the rights which their fathers had enjoyed, and which had been secured to the rest of the empire. They began with pleading precedent. They took their first stand on the British constitution. They claimed the rights of Englishmen. They set up the case of peculiar oppression; and did not appeal to arms, until they had sought redress, for years, by patient and respectful remonstrance; until they had exhausted every means of conciliation which wisdom could devise or a just self-respect would allow. Such was the code of national morality to which our fathers bowed; and in so doing they acknowledged the sacredness of allegiance, and manifested their deep conviction of the fearful responsibility of subverting a government and of rupturing national ties. A province, in estimating its grievances, should have respect to the general condition of the country to which it belongs. A colony, emigrating from a highly civilized country, has no right to expect in a less favored state the privileges it has left behind. The Texans must have been insane, if, on entering Mexico, they looked for an administration as faultless as that under which they had lived. They might with equal reason have planted themselves in Russia, and then have unfurled the banner of independence near the throne of the Czar, because denied the immunities of their native land.

Having thus considered the grievances of the Texans, I now proceed to consider the real and great causes of the revolt. These are matters of notoriety, so as to

Hosted by Google

need no minute exposition. The first great cause was the unbounded, unprincipled spirit of land speculation, which so tempting a prize as Texas easily kindled in multitudes in the United States, where this mode of gambling is too common a vice. Large grants of land in Texas were originally made to individuals, chiefly citizens of our country, who, in many cases, transferred their claims to joint-stock companies in some of our cities. A quotation will illustrate the nature of these grants and the frauds and speculations to which they gave birth. "The nominal grantee is called the *empresario*. He is considered, by the terms of the contract, merely as a trustee of the government, having no title himself to the land within the limits of his future colony, except upon condition of settling a number of families [within a given time]. The settlers themselves receive a title for each family for a league square, upon the express condition of settlement and cultivation, and the payment of certain very moderate charges within a limited period. It is believed, that these conditions were by the colonization laws of Mexico the basis of all the land-titles in Texas, together with the further condition, that all right and title should be forfeited, if the grantee [or new settler] should abandon the country, or sell his land before having cultivated it. An inspection of the various maps of Texas will show how numerous have been these privileges conceded to various *empresarios*. The face of the province, from Nueces to Red River, and from the Gulf to the mountains, is nearly covered by them. It became at last a matter of greedy speculation; and it is a notorious fact, that many of the *empresarios*, forgetting the contingent character of their own rights to the soil, and the conditions

Hosted by Google

upon which their future colonists were to receive allotments of land, proceeded at once to make out scrip, which has been sold in the United States to an incalculable amount. In addition to this, we are informed on the best authority, that the manufacture of land-titles, having no foundation whatever, has been carried on as a regular business. That frauds of these different kinds have been practised on the cupidity and credulity of the people of the United States, is beyond doubt. Had the close of the present campaign been what its opening seemed to portend, and the colonies been broken up, it would be impossible to calculate the losses which would be sustained by those who have never seen the land which they have bought. It is not hazarding too much to say, that millions have been expended in the Southern and Southwestern States."

Texas, indeed, has been regarded as a prey for land speculators within its own borders and in the United States. To show the scale on which this kind of plunder has been carried on, it may be stated, that the legislature of Coahuila and Texas, in open violation of the laws of Mexico, were induced "by a company of land speculators, never distinctly known, to grant them, in consideration of twenty thousand dollars, the extent of four hundred square leagues of the public land.* This transaction was disavowed, and the grant annulled, by the Mexican government, and led to the dispersion of the legislature, and the imprisonment of the governor, Viesca. And yet this unauthorized, and, perhaps, corrupt, grant of public lands formed the basis of new speculation and frauds. A new scrip was formed; and, according to the best information we have been able to

* Another account says, 411 leagues for 30,000 dollars.

Hosted by Google

obtain, four hundred leagues became, in the hands of speculators, as many thousands. The extent of these frauds is yet to be ascertained; for such is the blindness of cupidity, that any thing which looks fair on paper passes without scrutiny for a land-title in Texas." The indignation excited in the Mexican government by this enormous grant, and the attempt to seize the legislators who perpetrated it, were among the immediate excitements to the revolt. In consequence of these lawless proceedings, great numbers in this country and Texas have nominal titles to land, which can only be substantiated by setting aside the authority of the General Congress of Mexico, and are, of consequence, directly and strongly interested in severing this province from the Mexican confederacy. Texan independence can alone legalize the mighty frauds of the land speculator. Texas must be wrested from the country to which she owes allegiance, that her soil may pass into the hands of cheating and cheated foreigners. We have here one explanation of the zeal, with which the Texan cause was embraced in the United States. From this country the great impulse has been given to the Texan revolution; and a principal motive has been, the unappeasable hunger for Texan land. An interest in that soil, whether real or fictitious, has been spread over our country. Thus "the generous zeal for freedom," which has stirred and armed so many of our citizens to fight for Texas, turns out to be a passion for unrighteous spoil.

I proceed to another cause of the revolt; and this was, the resolution to throw Texas open to slave-holders and slaves. Mexico, at the moment of throwing off the Spanish yoke, gave a noble testimony of her loyalty to

Hosted by Google

free principles, by decreeing, "that no person thereafter should be born a slave or introduced as such into the Mexican States; that all slaves then held should receive stipulated wages, and be subject to no punishment but on trial and judgment by the magistrate." The subsequent acts of the government carried out fully these constitutional provisions. It is matter of deep grief and humiliation, that the emigrants from this country, whilst boasting of superior civilization, refused to second this honorable policy, intended to set limits to one of the greatest social evils. Slaves were brought into Texas with their masters from the neighbouring States of this country. One mode of evading the laws was, to introduce slaves under formal indentures for long periods, in some cases it is said for ninety-nine years. By a decree of the State Legislature of Coahuila and Texas, all indentures for a longer period than ten years were annulled, and provision was made for the freedom of children born during this apprenticeship. This settled, invincible purpose of Mexico to exclude slavery from her limits, created as strong a purpose to annihilate her authority in Texas. By this prohibition, Texas was virtually shut against emigration from the Southern and Western portions of this country; and it is well known that the eyes of the South and West had for some time been turned to this province, as a new market for slaves, as a new field for slave labor, and as a vast accession of political power to the Slave-holding States. That such views were prevalent, we know; for, nefarious as they are, they found their way into the public prints. The project of dismembering a neighbouring republic, that slave-holders and slaves might overspread a region which had been consecrated to a free population, was

Hosted by Google

discussed in newspapers as coolly as if it were a matter of obvious right and unquestionable humanity. A powerful interest was thus created for severing from Mexico her distant province. We have here a powerful incitement to the Texan revolt, and another explanation of the eagerness, with which men and money were thrown from the United States into that region to carry on the war of revolution.

I proceed to another circumstance, which helped to determine or at least to hasten the insurrection; and that was, the disappointment of the Texans in their efforts to obtain for themselves an organization as a separate State. Texas and Coahuila had hitherto formed a single State. But the colonists, being a minority in the joint legislature, found themselves thwarted in their plans. Impatient of this restraint, and probably suffering at times from a union which gave the superiority to others, they prepared for themselves a constitution, by which they were to be erected into a separate State, neglecting in their haste the forms prescribed by the Mexican law. This instrument they forwarded to the capital for the sanction of the General Congress, by whom it was immediately rejected. Its informality was a sufficient reason for its finding no better reception; but the omission of all provision to secure the country against slavery, was a more serious obstacle to its ratification. The irritation of the Texans was great. Once invested with the powers of a State, they would not have found it difficult, in their remoteness from the capital and in the unsettled state of the nation, to manage their affairs in their own way. A virtual independence might have been secured, and the laws of Mexico evaded with impunity. Their exasperation was increased

Hosted by Google

by the imprisonment of the agent who had carried the instrument to Mexico, and who had advised them, in an intercepted letter, to take matters into their own hands, or to organize a State Government without authority from the National Congress. Thus denied the privilege of a separate State, and threatened with new attempts on the part of the General Government to enforce the laws, they felt that the critical moment had arrived; and, looking abroad for help, resolved to take the chances of a conflict with the crippled power of Mexico.

Such were the chief excitements to the revolt. Undoubtedly, the Texans were instigated by the idea of wrongs, as well as by mercenary hopes. But had they yielded true obedience to the country of which they had, with their own free will, become a part; had they submitted to the laws relating to the revenue, to the sale of lands, and to slavery; the wrongs of which they complained might never have been experienced, or might never have been construed into a plea for insurrection. The great motives to revolt on which I have insisted are so notorious, that it is wonderful that any among us could be cheated into sympathy with the Texan cause, as the cause of freedom. Slavery and fraud lay at its very foundation. It is notorious, that land speculators, slave-holders, and selfish adventurers were among the foremost to proclaim and engage in the crusade for "Texan liberties." From the hands of these we are invited to receive a province, torn from a country to which we have given pledges of amity and peace. — In these remarks, I do not, of course, intend to say that every invader of Texas was carried thither by selfish motives. Some, I doubt not, were impelled by a generous interest in what bore the name of liberty; and

Hosted by Google

more by that natural sympathy which incites a man to take part with his countrymen against a stranger, without stopping to ask whether they are right or wrong. But the motives, which rallied the great efficient majority round the standard of Texas, were such as have been exposed, and should awaken any sentiment but respect.

Having considered the motives of the revolution, I proceed to inquire, How was it accomplished? The answer to this question will show more fully the criminality of the enterprise. The Texans, we have seen, were a few thousands, as unfit for sovereignty as one of our towns; and, if left to themselves, must have utterly despaired of achieving independence. They looked abroad; and to whom did they look? To any foreign state? To the government under which they had formerly lived? No; their whole reliance was placed on selfish individuals in a neighbouring republic at peace with Mexico. They looked wholly to private individuals, to citizens of this country, to such among us, as, defying the laws of the land, and hungry for sudden gain, should be lured by the scent of this mighty prey, and should be ready to stain their hands with blood for spoil. They held out a country as a prize to the reckless, lawless, daring, avaricious, and trusted to the excitements of intoxicated imagination and insatiable cupidity, to supply them with partners in their scheme of violence.

By whom has Texas been conquered? By the colonists? By the hands which raised the standard of revolt? By foreign governments espousing their cause? No; it has been conquered by your and my countrymen, by citizens of the United States, in violation of our

Hosted by Google

laws and of the laws of nations. We, we have filled the ranks which have wrested Texas from Mexico. In the army of eight hundred men who won the victory which scattered the Mexican force, and made its chief a prisoner, "not more than fifty were citizens of Texas having grievances of their own to seek relief from on that field." The Texans in this warfare are little more than a name, a cover, under which selfish adventurers from another country have prosecuted their work of plunder.

Some crimes, by their magnitude, have a touch of the sublime; and to this dignity the seizure of Texas by our citizens is entitled. Modern times furnish no example of individual rapine on so grand a scale. It is nothing less than the robbery of a realm. The pirate seizes a ship. The colonists and their coadjutors can satisfy themselves with nothing short of an empire. They have left their Anglo-Saxon ancestors behind them. Those barbarians conformed to the maxims of their age, to the rude code of nations in time of thickest heathen darkness. They invaded England under their sovereigns, and with the sanction of the gloomy religion of the North. But it is in a civilized age, and amidst refinements of manners; it is amidst the lights of science and the teachings of Christianity, amidst expositions of the law of nations and enforcements of the law of universal love, amidst institutions of religion, learning, and humanity, that the robbery of Texas has found its instruments. It is from a free, well-ordered, enlightened Christian country, that hordes have gone forth, in open day, to perpetrate this mighty wrong.

Let me now ask, are the United States prepared to receive from these hands the gift of Texas? In an-

Hosted by Google

nexing it to this country, shall we not appropriate to ourselves the fruits of a rapine which we ought to have suppressed? We certainly should shrink from a proposition to receive a piratical state into our confederacy. And of whom does Texas consist? Very much of our own citizens, who have won a country by waging war against a foreign nation, to which we owed protection against such assaults. Does it consist with national honor, with national virtue, to receive to our embrace men who have prospered by crimes which we were bound to reprobate and repress?

Had this country resisted with its whole power the lawlessness of its citizens; had these, notwithstanding such opposition, succeeded in extorting from Mexico a recognition of independence; and were their sovereignty acknowledged by other nations; we should stand acquitted, in the sight of the civilized world, of participating in their crime, were considerations of policy to determine us to admit them into our Union. Unhappily, the United States have not discharged the obligations of a neutral state. They have suffered, by a culpable negligence, the violation of the Mexican territory by their citizens; and if now, in the midst of the conflict, whilst Mexico yet threatens to enforce her claims, they should proceed to incorporate Texas with themselves, they would involve themselves, before all nations, in the whole infamy of the revolt. The United States have not been just to Mexico. Our citizens did not steal singly, silently, in disguise, into that land. Their purpose of dismembering Mexico, and attaching her distant province to this country, was not wrapped in mystery. It was proclaimed in our public prints. Expeditions were openly fitted out within our borders for the Texan

Hosted by Google

war. Troops were organized, equipped, and marched for the scene of action. Advertisements for volunteers, to be enrolled and conducted to Texas at the expense of that territory, were inserted in our newspapers. The government, indeed, issued its proclamation, forbidding these hostile preparations; but this was a dead letter. Military companies, with officers and standards, in defiance of proclamations, and in the face of day, directed their steps to the revolted province. We had, indeed, an army near the frontiers of Mexico. Did it turn back these invaders of a land with which we were at peace? On the contrary, did not its presence give confidence to the revolters? After this, what construction of our conduct shall we force on the world, if we proceed, especially at this moment, to receive into our Union the territory, which, through our neglect, has fallen a prey to lawless invasion? Are we willing to take our place among robber-states? As a people, have we no self-respect? Have we no reverence for national morality? Have we no feeling of responsibility to other nations, and to Him by whom the fates of nations are disposed?

II. Having unfolded the argument against the annexation of Texas from the criminality of the revolt, I proceed to a second very solemn consideration, namely, that by this act our country will enter on a career of encroachment, war, and crime, and will merit and incur the punishment and woe of aggravated wrong-doing. The seizure of Texas will not stand alone. It will darken our future history. It will be linked by an iron necessity to long-continued deeds of rapine and blood. Ages may not see the catastrophe of the tragedy, the

Hosted by Google

first scene of which we are so ready to enact. It is strange that nations should be so much more rash than individuals; and this, in the face of experience, which has been teaching, from the beginning of society, that, of all precipitate and criminal deeds, those perpetrated by nations are the most fruitful of misery.

Did this country know itself, or were it disposed to profit by self-knowledge, it would feel the necessity of laying an immediate curb on its passion for extended territory. It would not trust itself to new acquisitions. It would shrink from the temptation to conquest. We are a restless people, prone to encroachment, impatient of the ordinary laws of progress, less anxious to consolidate and perfect than to extend our institutions, more ambitious of spreading ourselves over a wide space than of diffusing beauty and fruitfulness over a narrower field. We boast of our rapid growth, forgetting that, throughout nature, noble growths are slow. Our people throw themselves beyond the bounds of civilization, and expose themselves to relapses into a semi-barbarous state, under the impulse of wild imagination, and for the name of great possessions. Perhaps there is no people on earth, on whom the ties of local attachment sit so loosely. Even the wandering tribes of Scythia are bound to one spot, the graves of their fathers; but the homes and graves of our fathers detain us feebly. The known and familiar is often abandoned for the distant and untrodden; and sometimes the untrodden is not the less eagerly desired because belonging to others. We owe this spirit, in a measure, to our descent from men who left the old world for the new, the seats of ancient cultivation for a wilderness, and who advanced by driving before them the old occupants of the soil. To this

Hosted by Google

spirit we have sacrificed justice and humanity; and, through its ascendency, the records of this young nation are stained with atrocities, at which communities grown gray in corruption might blush.

It is full time, that we should lay on ourselves serious, resolute restraint. Possessed of a domain, vast enough for the growth of ages, it is time for us to stop in the career of acquisition and conquest. Already endangered by our greatness, we cannot advance without imminent peril to our institutions, union, prosperity, virtue, and peace. Our former additions of territory have been justified by the necessity of obtaining outlets for the population of the South and the West. No such pretext exists for the occupation of Texas. We cannot seize upon or join to ourselves that territory, without manifesting and strengthening the purpose of setting no limits to our empire. We give ourselves an impulse, which will and must precipitate us into new invasions of our neighbours' soil. Is it by pressing forward in this course that we are to learn self-restraint? Is cupidity to be appeased by gratification? Is it by unrighteous grasping, that an impatient people will be instructed how to hem themselves within the rigid bounds of justice?

Texas is a country conquered by our citizens; and the annexation of it to our Union will be the beginning of conquests, which, unless arrested and beaten back by a just and kind Providence, will stop only at the Isthmus of Darien. Henceforth, we must cease to cry, Peace, peace. Our Eagle will whet, not gorge its appetite on its first victim; and will snuff a more tempting quarry, more alluring blood, in every new region which opens southward. To annex Texas is to declare per-

Hosted by Google

petual war with Mexico. That word, *Mexico*, associated in men's minds with boundless wealth, has already awakened rapacity. Already it has been proclaimed, that the Anglo-Saxon race is destined to the sway of this magnificent realm, that the rude form of society, which Spain established there, is to yield and vanish before a higher civilization. Without this exposure of plans of rapine and subjugation, the result, as far as our will can determine it, is plain. Texas is the first step to Mexico. The moment we plant our authority on Texas, the boundaries of those two countries will become nominal, will be little more than lines on the sand of the sea-shore. In the fact, that portions of the Southern and Western States are already threatened with devastation, through the impatience of multitudes to precipitate themselves into the Texan land of promise, we have a pledge and earnest of the flood which will pour itself still farther south, when Texas shall be but partially overrun.

Can Mexico look without alarm on the approaches of this ever-growing tide? Is she prepared to be a passive prey? to shrink and surrender without a struggle? Is she not strong in her hatred, if not in her fortresses or skill? Strong enough to make war a dear and bloody game? Can she not bring to bear on us a force, more formidable than fleets, the force of privateers, that is, of legalized pirates, which, issuing from her ports, will scour the seas, prey on our commerce, and add to spoliation, cruelty and murder?

Even were the dispositions of our government most pacific and opposed to encroachment, the annexation of Texas would almost certainly embroil us with Mexico. This territory would be overrun by adventurers; and

Hosted by Google

the most unprincipled of these, the proscribed, the disgraced, the outcasts of society, would, of course, keep always in advance of the better population. These would represent our republic on the borders of the Mexican States. The history of the connexion of such men with the Indians, forewarns us of the outrages which would attend their contact with the border inhabitants of our southern neighbour. Texas, from its remoteness from the seat of government, would be feebly restrained by the authorities of the nation to which it would belong. Its whole early history would be a lesson of scorn for Mexico, an education for invasion of her soil. Its legislature would find in its position some color for stretching to the utmost the doctrine of state-sovereignty. It would not hear unmoved the cries for protection and vengeance, which would break from the frontier, from the very men whose lawlessness would provoke the cruelties so indignantly denounced; nor would it sift very anxiously the question, on which side the wrong began. To the wisdom, moderation, and tender mercies of the back-settlers and law-givers of Texas, the peace of this country would be committed.

Have we counted the cost of establishing and making perpetual these hostile relations with Mexico? Will wars, begun in rapacity, carried on so far from the centre of the confederation, and, of consequence, little checked or controlled by Congress, add strength to our institutions, or cement our union, or exert a healthy moral influence on rulers or people? What limits can be set to the atrocities of such conflicts? What limits to the treasures, which must be lavished on such distant borders? What limits to the patronage and power, which such distant expeditions must accumulate in the

Hosted by Google

hands of the Executive? Are the blood and hard-earned wealth of the older States to be poured out like water, to protect and revenge a new people, whose character and condition will plunge them into perpetual wrongs?

Is the time never to come, when the neighbourhood of a more powerful and civilized people will prove a blessing, instead of a curse, to an inferior community? It was my hope, when the Spanish colonies of this continent separated themselves from the mother country, and, in admiration of the United States, adopted republican institutions, that they were to find in us friends to their freedom, helpers to their civilization. If ever a people were placed by Providence in a condition to do good to a neighbouring state, we of this country sustained such a relation to Mexico. That nation, inferior in science, arts, agriculture, and legislation, looked to us with a generous trust. She opened her ports and territories to our farmers, mechanics, and merchants. We might have conquered her by the only honorable arms, by the force of superior intelligence, industry, and morality. We might silently have poured in upon her our improvements; and by the infusion of our population have assimilated her to ourselves. Justice, good-will, and profitable intercourse, might have cemented a lasting friendship. And what is now the case? A deadly hatred burns in Mexico towards this country. No stronger national sentiment now binds her scattered provinces together than dread and detestation of Republican America. She is ready to attach herself to Europe for defence from the United States. All the moral power, which we might have gained over Mexico,

Hosted by Google

we have thrown away; and suspicion, dread, and abhorrence, have supplanted respect and trust.

I am aware that these remarks are met by a vicious reasoning, which discredits a people among whom it finds favor. It is sometimes said, that nations are swayed by laws, as unfailing as those which govern matter; that they have their destinies; that their character and position carry them forward irresistibly to their goal; that the stationary Turk must sink under the progressive civilization of Russia, as inevitably as the crumbling edifice falls to the earth; that, by a like necessity, the Indians have melted before the white man, and the mixed, degraded race of Mexico must melt before the Anglo-Saxon. Away with this vile sophistry! There is no necessity for crime. There is no Fate to justify rapacious nations, any more than to justify gamblers and robbers, in plunder. We boast of the progress of society, and this progress consists in the substitution of reason and moral principle for the sway of brute force. It is true, that more civilized must always exert a great power over less civilized communities in their neighbourhood. But it may and should be a power to enlighten and improve, not to crush and destroy. We talk of accomplishing our destiny. So did the late conqueror of Europe; and destiny consigned him to a lonely rock in the ocean, the prey of an ambition which destroyed no peace but his own.

Hitherto I have spoken of the annexation of Texas as embroiling us with Mexico; but it will not stop here. It will bring us into collision with other states. It will, almost of necessity, involve us in hostility with European powers. Such are now the connexions of nations, that Europe must look with jealousy on a country, whose

Hosted by Google

ambition, seconded by vast resources, will seem to place within her grasp the empire of the new world. And not only general considerations of this nature, but the particular relation of certain foreign states to this continent, must tend to destroy the peace now happily subsisting between us and the kingdoms of Europe England, in particular, must watch us with suspicion, and cannot but resist our appropriation of Texas to ourselves. She has at once a moral and political interest in this question, which demands and will justify interference.

First, England has a moral interest in this question. The annexation of Texas is sought by us for the very porpose of extending slavery, and thus will necessarily give new life and extension to the slave-trade. A new and vast market for slaves cannot, of course, be opened, without inviting and obtaining a supply from abroad, as well as from this country. The most solemn treaties, and ships of war lining the African coast, do not and cannot suppress this infernal traffic, as long as the slaver, freighted with stolen, chained, and wretched captives, can obtain a price proportioned to the peril of the undertaking. Now, England has long made it a part of her foreign policy to suppress the slave-trade; and, of late, a strong public feeling impels the government to resist, as far as may be, the extension of slavery. Can we expect her to be a passive spectator of a measure, by which her struggles for years in the cause of humanity, and some of her strongest national feelings, are to be withstood?

England is a privileged nation. On one part of her history she can look with unmixed self-respect. With the exception of the promulgation of Christianity, I

Hosted by Google

know not a moral effort so glorious, as the long, painful, victorious struggle of her philanthropists against that concentration of all horrors, cruelties and crimes, the slave-trade. Next to this, her recent Emancipation Act is the most signal expression, afforded by our times, of the progress of civilization and a purer Christianity. Other nations have won imperishable honors by heroic struggles for their own rights. But there was wanting the example of a nation espousing, with disinterestedness, and amidst great obstacles, the rights of others, the rights of those who had no claim but that of a common humanity, the rights of the most fallen of the race. Great Britain, loaded with an unprecedented debt and with a grinding taxation, contracted a new debt of a hundred million dollars, to give freedom, not to Englishmen, but to the degraded African. This was not an act of policy, not a work of statesmen. Parliament but registered the edict of the people. The English nation, with one heart and one voice, under a strong Christian impulse, and without distinction of rank, sex, party or religious names, decreed freedom to the slave. I know not that history records a national act so disinterested, so sublime. In the progress of ages, England's naval triumphs will shrink into a more and more narrow space in the records of our race. This moral triumph will fill a broader, brighter page. Is not England, representing, as she does in this case, the civilized world, authorized, and even bound, to remonstrate, in the name of humanity and religion, against a measure, by which the great work, for which she has so long toiled, is to be indefinitely postponed?

But England has a political as well as a moral interest in this question. By the annexation of Texas we shall

Hosted by Google

approach her liberated colonies; we shall build up a power in her neighbourhood, to which no limits can be prescribed. By adding Texas to our acquisition of Florida, we shall do much toward girdling the Gulf of Mexico; and I doubt not, that some of our politicians will feel, as if our mastery in that sea were sure. The West Indian Archipelago, in which the European is regarded as an intruder, will, of course, be embraced in our ever-growing scheme of empire. In truth, collision with the West Indies will be the most certain effect of the extension of our power in that quarter. The example, which they exhibit, of African freedom, of the elevation of the colored race to the rights of men, is, of all influences, most menacing to slavery at the South. It must grow continually more perilous. These islands, unless interfered with from abroad, seem destined to be nurseries of civilization and freedom to the African race. The white race must melt more and more before the colored, if both are left to free competition. The Europeans, unnerved by the climate, and forming but a handful of the population, cannot stand before the African, who revels in the heat of the tropics, and is to develope under it all his energies. Will a slave-holding people, spreading along the shores of the Mexican Gulf, cultivate friendly sentiments towards communities, whose whole history will be a bitter reproach to their institutions, a witness against their wrongs, and whose ardent sympathies will be enlisted in the cause of the slave? Cruel, ferocious conflicts must grow from this neighbourhood of hostile principles, of communities regarding one another with unextinguishable hatred. All the islands of the Archipelago will have cause to dread our power, but none so much as the emancipated. Is it not more

Hosted by Google

than possible, that wars, having for an object the subjugation of the colored race, the destruction of this tempting example of freedom, should spring from the proposed extension of our dominion along the Mexican Gulf? Can England view our encroachments without alarm? I know it is thought, that, staggering, as she does, under her enormous debt, she will be slow to engage in war. But other nations of Europe have islands in the same neighbourhood, to induce them to make common cause with her. Other nations look with jealousy on our peculiar institutions and our growing maritime power. Other nations are unwilling that we should engross or control the whole commerce of the Mexican Gulf. We ought to remember, that this jealousy is sanctioned by our example. It is understood, that, at one period of the internal disorders of Spain, which rendered all her foreign possessions insecure, we sought from France and Great Britain assurances that they would not possess themselves of Cuba. Still more, after the revolt of her colonies from Spain, and after our recognition of their independence, it was announced to the nations of Europe, in the message of the President, that we should regard as hostile, any interference, on their part, with these new governments, "for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling their destiny in any other way." I, of course, have no communication with foreign cabinets; but I cannot doubt that Great Britain has remonstrated against the annexation of Texas to this country. An English minister would be unworthy of his office, who should see another state greedily swallowing up territories in the neighbourhood of British colonies, and not strive, by all just means, to avert the danger. I have just referred to the warning given by us to the

Hosted by Google

powers of Europe, to abstain from appropriating to themselves the colonies torn from Spain. How will Europe interpret our act, if we now seize Texas, and take this stride towards Mexico? Will she not suspect, that we purposed to drive away the older vultures, in order to keep the victim to ourselves; that, conscious of growing power, we foresaw, in the exclusion of foreign states, the sure extension of our own dominion over the new world? Can we expect those powers, with such an example before them, to heed our warning? Will they look patiently on, and see the young vulture feasting on the nearest prey, and fleshing itself for the spoils which their own possessions will next present? Will it be strange, if hunger for a share of the plunder, as well as the principle of self-defence, should make this continent the object of their policy to an extent we have never dreamed?

It is of great and manifest importance, that we should use every just means to separate this continent from the politics of Europe, that we should prevent, as far as possible, all connexion, except commercial, between the old and the new world, that we should give to foreign states no occasion or pretext for insinuating themselves into our affairs. For this end, we should maintain towards our sister republics a more liberal policy than was ever adopted by nation towards nation. We should strive to appease their internal divisions, and to reconcile them to each other. We should even make sacrifices to build up their strength. Weak and divided, they cannot but lean upon foreign support. No pains should be spared to prevent or allay the jealousies, which the great superiority of this country is suited to awaken. By an opposite policy we shall favor foreign interfer-

Hosted by Google

ence. By encroaching on Mexico, we shall throw her into the arms of European states, shall compel her to seek defence in transatlantic alliance. How plain is it, that alliance with Mexico will be hostility to the United States, that her defenders will repay themselves by making her subservient to their views, that they will thus strike root in her soil, monopolize her trade, and control her resources. And with what face can we resist the aggressions of others on our neighbour, if we give an example of aggression? Still more, if by our advances we put the colonies of England in new peril, with what face can we oppose her occupation of Cuba? Suppose her, with that magnificent island in her hands, to command the Mexican Gulf and the mouths of the Mississippi; will the Western States find compensation for this formidable neighbourhood, in the privilege of flooding Texas with slaves?

Thus, wars with Europe and Mexico are to be entailed on us by the annexation of Texas. And is war the policy by which this country is to flourish? Was it for interminable conflicts that we formed our Union? Is it blood, shed for plunder, which is to consolidate our institutions? Is it by collision with the greatest maritime power, that our commerce is to gain strength? Is it by arming against ourselves the moral sentiments of the world, that we are to build up national honor? Must we of the North buckle on our armour, to fight the battles of slavery; to fight for a possession, which our moral principles and just jealousy forbid us to incorporate with our confederacy? In attaching Texas to ourselves, we provoke hostilities, and at the same time expose new points of attack to our foes. Vulnerable at so many points, we shall need a vast military force

Hosted by Google

Great armies will require great revenues, and raise up great chieftains. Are we tired of freedom, that we are prepared to place it under such guardians? Is the republic bent on dying by its own hands? Does not every man feel, that, with war for our habit, our institutions cannot be preserved? If ever a country were bound to peace, it is this. Peace is our great interest. In peace our resources are to be developed, the true interpretation of the constitution to be established, and the interfering claims of liberty and order to be adjusted. In peace we are to discharge our great debt to the human race, and to diffuse freedom by manifesting its fruits. A country has no right to adopt a policy, however gainful, which, as it may foresee, will determine it to a career of war. A nation, like an individual, is bound to seek, even by sacrifices, a position, which will favor peace, justice, and the exercise of a beneficent influence on the world. A nation, provoking war by cupidity, by encroachment, and, above all, by efforts to propagate the curse of slavery, is alike false to itself, to God, and to the human race.

III. I proceed now to a consideration of what is to me the strongest argument against annexing Texas to the United States. This measure will extend and perpetuate slavery. I have necessarily glanced at this topic in the preceding pages; but it deserves to be brought out distinctly. I shall speak calmly, but I must speak earnestly; and I feel, and rejoice to feel, that, however you may differ from some of my views, yet we do not differ as to the great principle on which all my remarks and remonstrances are founded. Slavery seems to you, as to me, an evil and a wrong. Your language on this

Hosted by Google

subject has given me a satisfaction, for which I owe you thanks ; and if, in what I am now to say, I may use expressions which you may think too strong, I am sure your candor will recognise in them the signs of deep conviction, and will acquit me of all desire to irritate or give pain.

The annexation of Texas, I have said, will extend and perpetuate slavery. It is fitted, and, still more, intended to do so. On this point there can be no doubt. As far back as the year 1829, the annexation of Texas was agitated in the Southern and Western States ; and it was urged on the ground of the strength and extension it would give the slave-holding interest. In a series of essays, ascribed to a gentleman now a senator in Congress, it was maintained, that five or six slave-holding States would by this measure be added to the Union ; and he even intimated that as many as nine States as large as Kentucky might be formed within the limits of Texas. In Virginia, about the same time, calculations were made as to the increased value which would thus be given to slaves, and it was even said, that this acquisition would raise the price fifty per cent. Of late the language on this subject is most explicit. The great argument for annexing Texas is, that it will strengthen "the pecular institutions" of the South, and open a new and vast field for slavery.

By this act, slavery will be spread over regions to which it is now impossible to set limits. Texas, I repeat it, is but the first step of aggressions. I trust, indeed, that Providence will beat back and humble our cupidity and ambition. But one guilty success is often suffered to be crowned, as men call it, with greater; in order that a more awful retribution may at length

Hosted by Google

vindicate the justice of God, and the rights of the oppressed. Texas, smitten with slavery, will spread the infection beyond herself. We know that the tropical regions have been found most propitious to this pestilence; nor can we promise ourselves, that its expulsion from them for a season forbids its return. By annexing Texas, we may send this scourge to a distance, which, if now revealed, would appall us, and through these vast regions every cry of the injured will invoke wrath on our heads.

By this act, slavery will be perpetuated in the old States, as well as spread over new. It is well known, that the soil of some of the old States has become exhausted by slave cultivation. Their neighbourhood to communities, which are flourishing under free labor, forces on them perpetual arguments for adopting this better system. They now adhere to slavery, not on account of the wealth which it extracts from the soil, but because it furnishes men and women to be sold in newly settled and more southern districts. It is by slave-breeding and slave-selling that these States subsist. Take away from them a foreign market, and slavery would die. Of consequence, by opening a new market, it is prolonged and invigorated. By annexing Texas, we shall not only create it where it does not exist, but breathe new life into it, where its end seemed to be near. States, which might and ought to throw it off, will make the multiplication of slaves their great aim and chief resource.

Nor is the worst told. As I have before intimated, and it cannot be too often repeated, we shall not only quicken the domestic slave-trade; we shall give a new impulse to the foreign. This, indeed, we have pro-

Hosted by Google

nounced in our laws to be felony; but we make our laws cobwebs, when we offer to rapacious men strong motives for their violation. Open a market for slaves in an unsettled country, with a sweep of sea-coast, and at such a distance from the seat of government that laws may be evaded with impunity, and how can you exclude slaves from Africa? It is well known that cargoes have been landed in Louisiana. What is to drive them from Texas? In incorporating this region with the Union to make it a slave-country, we send the kidnapper to prowl through the jungles, and to dart, like a beast of prey, on the defenceless villages of Africa; we chain the helpless, despairing victims; crowd them into the fetid, pestilential slave-ship; expose them to the unutterable cruelties of the middle passage, and, if they survive it, crush them with perpetual bondage.

I now ask, whether, as a people, we are prepared to seize on a neighbouring territory for the end of extending slavery? I ask, whether, as a people, we can stand forth in the sight of God, in the sight of the nations, and adopt this atrocious policy? Sooner perish! Sooner be our name blotted out from the record of nations!

This is no place for entering into the argument against slavery. I have elsewhere given my views of it. In truth, no argument is needed. The evil of slavery speaks for itself. It is one of those primary, intuitive truths, which need only a fair exhibition to be immediately received. To state is to condemn this institution. The choice which every freeman makes of death for his child and for every thing he loves, in preference to slavery, shows what it is. The single consideration, that, by slavery, one human being is placed powerless

and defenceless in the hands of another, to be driven to whatever labor that other may impose, to suffer whatever punishment he may inflict, to live as his tool, the instrument of his pleasure, this is all that is needed, to satisfy such as know the human heart and its unfitness for irresponsible power, that, of all conditions, slavery is the most hostile to the dignity, self-respect, improvement, rights, and happiness of human beings. Is it within the bounds of credibility, that a people, boasting of freedom, of civilization, of Christianity, should systematically strive to spread this calamity over the earth?

To perpetuate and extend slavery is not now, in a moral point of view, what it once was. We cannot shelter ourselves under the errors and usages of our times. We do not belong to the dark ages, or to heathenism. We have not grown up under the prejudices of a blinding, crushing tyranny. We live under free institutions and under the broad light of Christianity. Every principle of our government and religion condemns slavery. The spirit of our age condemns it. The decree of the civilized world has gone out against it. England has abolished it. France and Denmark meditate its abolition. The chain is falling from the serf in Russia. In the whole circuit of civilized nations, with the single exception of the United States, not a voice is lifted up in defence of slavery. All the great names in legislation and religion are against it. The most enduring reputations of our times have been won by resisting it. Recall the great men of this and the last generation, and, be they philosophers, philanthropists, poets, economists, statesmen, jurists, all swell the reprobation of slavery. The leaders of opposing religious sects, Wesley, the patriarch of Methodism,

Hosted by Google

Edwards and Hopkins, pillars of Calvinism, join as brothers in one solemn testimony against slavery. And is this an age in which a free and Christian people shall deliberately resolve to extend and perpetuate the evil? In so doing, we cut ourselves off from the communion of the nations; we sink below the civilization of our age; we invite the scorn, indignation, and abhorrence of the world.

Let it not be said, that this opposition of our times to slavery is an accident, a temporary gust of opinion, an eddy in the current of human thought, a fashion to pass away with the present actors on the stage. He who so says must have read history with a superficial eye, and is strangely blind to the deepest and most powerful influences which are moulding society. Christianity has done more than all things to determine the character and direction of our present civilization; and who can question or overlook the tendency and design of this religion? Christianity has no plainer purpose than to unite all men as brethren, to make man unutterably dear to man, to pour contempt on outward distinctions, to raise the fallen, to league all in efforts for the elevation of all. Under its influence, the differences of nations and rank are softening. To the establishment of a fraternal relation among men, the science, literature, commerce, education of the Christian world are tending. Who cannot see this mighty movement of Providence? Who is so blind as to call it a temporary impulse? Who so daring, so impious, as to strive to arrest it?

What is the tendency of all governments in the Christian world? To secure more and more to every man his rights, be his condition what it may. Even in des-

Hosted by Google

potisms, where political rights are denied, private rights are held more and more sacred. The absolute monarch is more and more anxious to improve the laws of the state, and to extend their protection and restraints over all classes and individuals without distinction. Equality before the law is the maxim of the civilized world. To place the rights of a large part of the community beyond the protection of law, to place half a people under private, irresponsible power, is to oppose one of the most characteristic and glorious tendencies of modern times. Who has the courage to set down this reverence for private rights among the fashions and caprices of the day? Is it not founded in everlasting truth? And dare we, in the face of it, extend and perpetuate an institution, the grand feature of which is, that it tramples private rights in the dust?

Whoever studies modern history with any care must discern in it a steady, growing movement towards one most interesting result, — I mean, towards the elevation of the laboring class of society. This is not a recent, accidental turn of human affairs. We can trace its beginning in the feudal times, and its slow advances in subsequent periods, until it has become the master movement of our age. Is it not plain, that those who toil with their hands, and whose productive industry is the spring of all wealth, are rising from the condition of beasts of burden, to which they were once reduced, to the consciousness, intelligence, self-respect, and proper happiness of men? Is it not the strong tendency of our times to diffuse among the many the improvements once confined to the few? He who overlooks this has no comprehension of the great work of Providence, or of the most signal feature of his times; and is this an

Hosted by Google

age for efforts to extend and perpetuate an institution, the very object of which is to keep down the laborer, and to make him a machine for another's gratification?

I know it has been said, in reply to such views, that, do what we will with the laborer, call him what we will, he is and must be in reality a slave. The doctrine has been published at the South, that nature has made two classes, the rich and the poor, the employer and the employed, the capitalist and the operative, and that the class who work are, to all intents, slaves to those in whose service they are engaged. In a report on the mail, recently offered to the Senate of the United States, an effort was made to establish resemblances between slavery and the condition of free laborers, for the obvious purpose of showing, that the shades of difference between them are not very strong. Is it possible that such reasonings escaped from a man who has trod the soil of New England, and was educated at one of her colleges? Whom did he meet at that college? The sons of her laborers, young men whose hands had been hardened at the plough. Does he not know, that the families of laborers have furnished every department in life among us with illustrious men, have furnished our heroes in war, our statesmen in council, our orators in the pulpit and at the bar, our merchants whose enterprises embrace the whole earth? What! the laborer of the Free State a slave, and to be ranked with the despised negro, whom the lash drives to toil, and whose dearest rights are at the mercy of irresponsible power? If there be a firm, independent spirit on earth, it is to be found in the man, who tills the fields of the Free States, and moistens them with the sweat of his brow. I recently heard of a visiter from the South compassion-

Hosted by Google

ating the operatives of our manufactories, as in a worse condition than the slave. What carries the young woman to the manufactory? Not, generally, the want of a comfortable home; but sometimes the desire of supplying herself with a wardrobe which ought to satisfy the affluent, and oftener the desire of furnishing in more than decent style the home, where she is to sustain the nearest relations, and perform the most sacred duties of life. Generally speaking, each of these young women has her plan of life, her hopes, her bright dreams, her spring of action in her own free will, and amidst toil she contrives to find seasons for intellectual and religious culture. It is common in New England for the sons of farmers to repair to the large towns, and there to establish themselves as domestics in families, a condition which the South will be peculiarly disposed to identify with slavery. But what brings these young men to the city? The hope of earning in a shorter time a sum, with which to purchase a farm at home or in the West, perhaps to become traders; and in these vocations they not unfrequently rise to consideration, and to what, in their places of residence, is called wealth. I have in my thoughts an individual distinguished alike by vigor and elevation of mind, who began life by hiring himself as a laborer to a farmer, and then entered a family as a domestic; and now he is the honored associate of the most enlightened men, and devotes himself to the highest subjects of human thought. It is true, that much remains to be done for the laboring class in the most favored regions; but the intelligence already spread through this class is an earnest of a brighter day, of the most glorious revolution in history, of the elevation of the mass of men to the dignity of human beings.

Hosted by Google

It is the great mission of this country to forward this revolution, and never was a sublimer work committed to a nation. Our mission is, to elevate society through all its conditions, to secure to every human being the means of progress, to substitute the government of equal laws for that of irresponsible individuals, to prove that, under popular institutions, the people may be carried forward, that the multitude who toil are capable of enjoying the noblest blessings of the social state. The prejudice, that labor is a degradation, one of the worst prejudices handed down from barbarous ages, is to receive here a practical refutation. The power of liberty to raise up the whole people, this is the great Idea, on which our institutions rest, and which is to be wrought out in our history. Shall a nation having such a mission abjure it, and even fight against the progress which it is specially called to promote?

The annexation of Texas, if it should be accomplished, would do much to determine the future history and character of this country. It is one of those measures, which call a nation to pause, reflect, look forward, because their force is not soon exhausted. Many acts of government, intensely exciting at the moment, are yet of little importance, because their influence is too transient to leave a trace on history. A bad administration may impoverish a people at home, or cripple its energies abroad, for a year or more. But such wounds heal soon. A young people soon recruits its powers, and starts forward with increased impulse, after the momentary suspension of its activity. The chief interest of a people lies in measures, which, making, perhaps, little noise, go far to fix its character, to determine its policy and fate for ages, to decide its rank among na-

Hosted by Google

tions. A fearful responsibility rests on those who originate or control these pregnant acts. The destiny of millions is in their hands. The execration of millions may fall on their heads. Long after present excitements shall have passed away, long after they and their generation shall have vanished from the earth, the fruits of their agency will be reaped. Such a measure is that of which I now write. It will commit us to a degrading policy, the issues of which lie beyond human foresight. In opening to ourselves vast regions, through which we may spread slavery, and in spreading it for this, among other ends, that the Slave-holding States may bear rule in the national councils, we make slavery the predominant interest of the state. We make it the basis of power, the spring or guide of public measures, the object for which the revenues, strength, and wealth of the country are to be exhausted. Slavery will be branded on our front, as the great Idea, the prominent feature of the country. We shall renounce our high calling as a people, and accomplish the lowest destiny to which a nation can be bound.

And are we prepared for this degradation? Are we prepared to couple with the name of our country the infamy of deliberately spreading slavery? and especially, of spreading it through regions from which the wise and humane legislation of a neighbouring republic had excluded it? We call Mexico a semi-barbarous people; and yet we talk of planting slavery where Mexico would not suffer it to live. What American will not blush to lift his head in Europe, if this disgrace shall be fastened on his country? Let other calamities, if God so will, come on us. Let us be steeped in poverty. Let pestilence stalk through our land. Let famine thin our

Hosted by Google

population. Let the world join hands against our free institutions, and deluge our shores with blood. All this can be endured. A few years of industry and peace will recruit our wasted numbers, and spread fruitfulness over our desolated fields. But a nation, devoting itself to the work of spreading and perpetuating slavery, stamps itself with a guilt and shame, which generations may not be able to efface. The plea on which we have rested, that slavery was not our choice, but a sad necessity bequeathed us by our fathers, will avail us no longer. The whole guilt will be assumed by ourselves.

It is very lamentable, that, among the distinguished men of the South, any should be found so wanting to their own fame, as to become advocates of slavery. That vulgar politicians, who look only at the interests of the day and the chances of the next election, should swell the madness of the passions, by which they hope to rise, is a thing of course. But that men, who might leave honorable and enduring record of themselves in their country's history, who might associate their names with their country's progress, and who are solemnly bound by their high gifts to direct and purify public sentiment, that such men should lend their great powers to the extension of slavery, is among the dark symptoms of the times. Can such men be satisfied with the sympathies and shouts of the little circle around them, and of the passing moment? Have they nothing of that prophetic instinct, by which truly great men read the future? Can they learn nothing from the sentence now passed on men, who, fifty years ago, defended the slave-trade? We have to rejoice, Sir, that you, amidst the excitements of the time, have always given your testimony against slavery. You have adhered to the

Hosted by Google

doctrine, which the great men of the South of the last generation asserted, that it is a great evil. We shall not forget this among the good services, which you have rendered to your country.

I have expressed my fears, that by the annexation of Texas, slavery is to be continued and extended. But I wish not to be understood, as having the slightest doubt as to the approaching fall of the institution. It may be prolonged, to our reproach and greater ultimate suffering. But fall it will and must. This, Sir, you know, and I doubt not, rejoice to know. The advocates of slavery must not imagine, that to carry a vote is to sustain their cause. With all their power, they cannot withstand the providence of God, the principles of human nature, the destinies of the race. To succeed, they must roll back time to the dark ages, must send back Luther to the cell of his monastery, must extinguish the growing light of Christianity and moral science, must blot out the declaration of American Independence. The fall of slavery is as sure as the descent of your own Ohio. Moral laws are as irresistible as physical. In the most enlightened countries of Europe, a man would forfeit his place in society, by vindicating slavery. The slave-holder must not imagine, that he has nothing to do but fight with a few societies. These, of themselves, are nothing. He should not waste on them one fear. They are strong, only as representing the spirit of the Christian and civilized world. His battle is with the laws of human nature and the irresistible tendencies of human affairs. These are not to be withstood by artful strokes of policy, or by daring crimes. The world is against him, and the world's Maker. Every day the sympathies of the world

Hosted by Google

are forsaking him. Can he hope to sustain slavery against the moral feeling, the solemn sentence of the human race?

The South, cut off by its "peculiar institutions" from close connexion with other communities, comprehends little the progress of the civilized world. The spirit, which is spreading through other communities, finds no organ within its borders, and the strength of this is therefore little understood. Hence, it looks on anti-slavery movements in any part of the country, as an accident, which a little force can put down. It might as well think of imprisoning the winds. The South is ignorant of what it most needs to know. A very intelligent gentleman from that quarter told me, not long ago, that he could not learn at home the working of Emancipation in the West Indies; so that an experiment of infinite interest to the slave-holder is going on at his door, and he knows little more of it than if it were occurring in another planet. Of course, there are exceptions. There are at the South philosophical observers of the progress of human affairs. But in such a state of society, it is hard to realize the truth on this subject. Were it known, the project of building a power on the diffusion of slavery would seem to be an act of madness, as truly as of crime.

I suppose that I shall be charged with unfriendly feelings towards the South. All such I disclaim. Strange as it may seem, if I have partialities, they are rather for the South. I spent a part of my early life in that region, when manners probably retained more of their primitive character than they now do; and to a young man, unaccustomed to life and its perils, there was something singularly captivating in the unbounded hospi-

Hosted by Google

tality, the impulsive generosity, the carelessness of the future, the frank, open manners, the buoyant spirit and courage, which marked the people; and though I have since learned to interpret more wisely what I then saw, still the impressions which I then received, and the friendships formed at a yet earlier age with the youth of the South, have always given me a leaning towards that part of the country. I am unconscious of local prejudices. My interest in the South strengthens my desire to avert the annexation of Texas to the Union. That act, I feel, will fix an indelible stain on the South. It will conflict with the generous elements of character, which I take pleasure in recollecting there. The South will cease to be what it was. In the period to which I have referred, slavery was acknowledged there to be a great evil. I heard it spoken of freely with abhorrence. The moral sentiment of the community on this point was not corrupt. The principles of Mr. Jefferson in relation to it found a wide response. The doctrine, that slavery is a good, if spread by the seizure of Texas, will work a moral revolution, the most disastrous which can befall the South. It will paralyze every effort for escape from this enormous evil. A deadly sophistry will weigh on men's consciences and hearts, until terrible convulsions, — God's just judgments, — will hasten the deliverance which human justice and benevolence were bound to accomplish.

IV. I now proceed to another important argument against the annexation of Texas to our country, the argument drawn from the bearings of the measure on our National Union. Next to liberty, union is our great political interest, and this cannot but be loosened, it

Hosted by Google

may be dissolved, by the proposed extension of our territory. I will not say that every extension must be pernicious, that our government cannot hold together even our present confederacy, that the central heart cannot send its influences to the remote States which are to spring up within our present borders. Old theories must be cautiously applied to the institutions of this country. If the Federal government will abstain from minute legislation, and rigidly confine itself within constitutional bounds, it may be a bond of union to more extensive communities than were ever comprehended under one sway. Undoubtedly, there is peril in extending ourselves, and yet the chief benefit of the Union, which is the preservation of peaceful relations among neighbouring States, is so vast, that some risk should be taken to secure it in the greatest possible degree. The objection to the annexation of Texas, drawn from the unwieldiness it would give to the country, though very serious, is not decisive. A far more serious objection is, that it is to be annexed to us for the avowed purpose of multiplying slave-holding States, and thus giving political power. This cannot, ought not to be borne. It will justify, it will at length demand, the separation of the States.

We maintain that this policy is altogether without reason on the part of the South. The South has exerted, and cannot help exerting, a disproportionate share of influence on the confederacy. The Slave-holding States have already advantages for coöperation, and for swaying the country, which the others do not possess. The Free States have no great common interest, like slavery, to hold them together. They differ in character, feelings, and pursuits. They agree but on one

Hosted by Google

point, and that a negative one, the absence of slavery; and this distinction, as is well-known, makes no lively impression on the consciousness, and in no degree counteracts the influences which divide them from one another. To this may be added the well-known fact, that in the Free States, the subject of politics is of secondary importance, whilst at the South it is paramount. At the North every man must toil for subsistence, and, amidst the feverish competitions and anxieties of the eager and universal pursuit of gain, political power is sought with little comparative avidity. In some districts it is hard to find fit representatives for Congress, so backward are superior men to forego the emoluments of their vocation, the prospects of independence, for the uncertainties of public life. At the North, too, a vast amount of energy is absorbed in associations of a religious, philanthropic, literary character. The apathy of the Free States in regard to Texas, an apathy from which they are just beginning to be roused, is a striking proof of their almost incredible indifference to political power. Perhaps no parallel to it can be found in the history of confederations. What a contrast does the South form with the divided and slumbering North! There, one strong, broad distinction exists, of which all the members of the community have a perpetual consciousness; there, a peculiar element is found, which spreads its influence through the mass, and impresses itself on the whole constitution of society. Slavery is not a superficial distinction. Nothing decides the character of a people more than the form and determination of labor. Hence we find a unity at the South unknown at the North. At the South, too, the proprietors, released from the necessity of labor, and having little of

Hosted by Google

the machinery of associations to engage their attention, devote themselves to politics with a concentration of zeal, which a Northern man can only comprehend by residing on the spot. Hence the South has professional politicians, a character hardly known in the Free States. The result is plain. The South has generally ruled the country. It must always have an undue power. United, as the North cannot be, it can always link with itself some discontented portion at the North, which it can liberally reward by the patronage which the possession of the government confers. That the constitutional rights of the South should be prejudiced by the North is one of those moral impossibilities, against which it is folly to ask security.

We cannot consent, that the South should extend its already disproportionate power by an indefinite extension of territory, because we maintain, that its dispositions towards us gives us no pledge, that its power will be well used. It is unhappily too well known, that it wants friendly feelings towards the North. Divided from us by an institution, which gives it a peculiar character, which lays it open to reproach, and which will never suffer it to rival our prosperity, it cannot look on us with favor. It magnifies our faults. It is blind to our virtues. At the North, no unfriendly disposition prevails towards the South. We are too busy and too prosperous for hatred. We complain, that our good-will is not reciprocated. We complain, that our commerce and manufactures have sometimes found little mercy at the hands of the South. Still more, we feel, though we are slow to complain of it, that in Congress, the common ground of the confederacy, we have had to encounter a tone and bearing, which it has required the colder temperament

Hosted by Google

of the North to endure. We cannot consent to take a lower place than we now hold. We cannot consent, that our confederacy should spread over the wilds of Mexico, to give us more powerful masters. The old balance of the country is unfavorable enough. We cannot consent, that a new weight should be thrown in, which may fix the political inferiority of ourselves and our posterity. I give you, Sir, the feelings of the North. In part they may be prejudices. Jealousies, often groundless, are the necessary fruits of confederations. On that account, measures must not be adopted, disturbing violently, unnaturally, unexpectedly, the old distributions of power, and directly aimed at that result.

In other ways the annexation of Texas is to endanger the Union. It will give new violence and passion to the agitation of the question of slavery. It is well known, that a majority at the North have discouraged the discussion of this topic, on the ground, that slavery was imposed on the South by necessity, that its continuance was not of choice, and that the States in which it subsists, if left to themselves, would find a remedy in their own way. Let slavery be systematically proposed as the policy of these States, let it bind them together in efforts to establish political power, and a new feeling will burst forth through the whole North. It will be a concentration of moral, religious, political, and patriotic feelings. The fire, now smothered, will blaze out, and, of consequence, new jealousies and exasperations will be kindled at the South. Strange, that the South should think of securing its "peculiar institutions" by violent means. Its violence necessarily increases the evils it would suppress. For example, by denying the right of petition to those who sought the abolition of

Hosted by Google

slavery within the immediate jurisdiction of the United States, it has awakened a spirit, which will overwhelm Congress with petitions till this right be restored. The annexation of Texas would be a measure of the same injurious character, and would stir up an open, uncompromising hostility to slavery, of which we have seen no example, and which would produce a reaction very dangerous to union.

The annexation of Texas will give rise to constitutional questions and conflicts, which cannot be adjusted. It is well known, that the additions to our territory of Louisiana and Florida were acceded to by the North, though very reluctantly, on account of their obvious utility. But it has been seriously doubted, whether the powers given by the Constitution were not in both cases transcended. "At the time Louisiana was acquired, Mr. Jefferson himself was deliberately of opinion, that the treaty-making authority, under the Constitution of the United States, was incompetent to make such an acquisition from a foreign power, and annex it to the Union, and that an amendment of the Constitution would be necessary to sanction it. In a letter to Governor Lincoln he even furnishes the formula of a proposed amendment, for the purpose of admitting Louisiana into the Union ; but adds, that the less that is said about the constitutional difficulty the better. Very little *was* said about it, and there was a general and tacit acquiescence, in consequence of the great and incalculable advantages expected from the acquisition in a national point of view. The purchase of Texas, under existing circumstances, might present a very different question." *

* North American Review, July, 1836

Hosted by Google

It is true, that, as a general rule, the right to purchase territory is incident to sovereignty. But the sovereignty of our national government is a limited one. The Constitution was a compromise among independent States, and it is well known that geographical relations and local interests were among the essential conditions on which the compromise was made. We are willing, for the sake of universally acknowledged public interests, that additions of territory should be made to our country. But can it be admitted, that the Constitution gives power to the President and Senate to add a vast realm to the United States, for the very purpose of disturbing the balance between different sections, or of securing ascendency to certain parts of the confederacy? Was not the Constitution founded on conditions or considerations, which are even more authoritative than its particular provisions, and the violation of which must be death to our Union? Besides, a new question is to be opened by the admission of Texas. We shall not purchase a territory, as in the case of Louisiana, but shall admit an independent community, invested with sovereignty, into the confederation; and can the treaty-making power do this? Can it receive foreign nations, however vast, to the Union? Does not the question carry its own answer? By the assumption of such a right, would not the old compact be at once considered as dissolved?

To me it seems not only the right, but the duty of the Free States, in case of the annexation of Texas, to say to the Slave-holding States, "We regard this act as the dissolution of the Union. The essential conditions of the national compact are violated. To you we will faithfully adhere, but will not join ourselves to this new

Hosted by Google

and iniquitous acquisition. We will not become partners in your wars with Mexico and Europe, in your schemes of spreading and perpetuating slavery, in your hopes of conquest, in your unrighteous spoils." No one prizes the Union more than myself, as the means of peace. But, with Texas, we shall have no peace. Texas, brought into the confederacy, will bring with it domestic and foreign strife. It will change our relations to other countries, and to one another. A pacific division in the first instance seems to me to threaten less contention than a lingering, feverish dissolution of the Union, such as must be expected under this fatal innovation.

I am but one of a nation of fifteen millions, and, as such, may seem too insignificant to protest against a public measure. But in this country every man, even the obscurest, participates in the sovereignty, and is responsible for public acts, unless by some mode of opposition, proportioned to his sense of the evil, he absolves himself from the guilt. For one then, I say, that, earnestly as I deprecate the separation of these States, and though this event would disappoint most cherished hopes for my country, still I can submit to it more readily than to the reception of Texas into the confederacy. I shrink from that contamination. I shrink from an act, which is to pledge us as a people to robbery and war, to the work of upholding and extending slavery without limitation or end. I do not desire to share the responsibility, or to live under the laws of a government, adopting such a policy, and swayed by such a spirit, as would be expressed by the incorporation of Texas with our country.

Hosted by Google

In truth, if the South is bent on incorporating Texas with itself, as a new prop to slavery, it would do well to insist on the division of the States. It would, in so doing, consult best its own safety. It should studiously keep itself from communion with the free part of the country. It should suffer no railroad from that section to cross its borders. It should block up intercourse with us by sea and land. Still more, it should abjure connexion with the whole civilized world; for, from every country it would be invaded by an influence hostile to slavery. It should borrow the code of the Dictator of Paraguay, and seal itself hermetically against the infectious books, opinions, and visits of foreigners. Its pride, as well as safety, should teach it this insulation; for, having once taken the ground, that slavery is a good, to be spread and made perpetual, it does by that act forfeit the rank which it covets among civilized and improving communities. It cannot be recognised as an equal by other states. On this point the decree of the world has gone forth, and no protests or clamors can drown the deep, solemn voice of humanity, gathering strength with every new generation. A community, acknowledging the evils of slavery, and continuing it only because the first law of nature, self-preservation, seems to require gradual processes of change, may retain the respect of those who deem their fears unfounded. But a community, wedding itself to slavery inseparably, with choice and affection, and with the purpose of spreading the plague far and wide, must become a by-word among the nations; and the friend of humanity will shake off the dust of his feet against it, in testimony of his reprobation.

Hosted by Google

V. I proceed now to the last head of this communication. I observe, that the cause of Liberty, of free institutions, a cause more sacred than union, forbids the annexation of Texas. It is plain from the whole preceding discussion, that this measure will exert a disastrous influence on the moral sentiments and principles of this country, by sanctioning plunder, by inflaming cupidity, by encouraging lawless speculation, by bringing into the confederacy a community whose whole history and circumstances are adverse to moral order and wholesome restraint, by violating national faith, by proposing immoral and inhuman ends, by placing us as a people in opposition to the efforts of philanthropy, and the advancing movements of the civilized world. It will spread a moral corruption, already too rife among us, and, in so doing, it will shake the foundations of freedom at home, and bring reproach on it abroad. It will be treachery to the great cause which has been confided to this above all nations.

The dependence of freedom on morals is an old subject, and I have no thought of enlarging on the general truth. I wish only to say, that it is one which needs to be brought home to us at the present moment, and that it cannot be trifled with but to our great peril. There are symptoms of corruption amongst us, which show us that we cannot enter on a new career of crime without peculiar hazard. I cannot do justice to this topic without speaking freely of our country, as freely as I should of any other; and unhappily we are so accustomed, as a people, to receive incense, to be soothed by flattery, and to account reputation as a more important interest than morality, that my freedom may be

Hosted by Google

construed into a kind of disloyalty. But it would be wrong to make concessions to this dangerous weakness. I believe that morality is the first interest of a people, and that this requires self-knowledge in nations, as truly as in individuals. He who helps a community to comprehend itself, and to apply to itself a higher rule of action, is the truest patriot, and contributes most to its enduring fame.

I have said, that we shall expose our freedom to great peril by entering on a new career of crime. We are corrupt enough already. In one respect, our institutions have disappointed us all. They have not wrought out for us that elevation of character, which is the most precious, and, in truth, the only substantial blessing of liberty. Our progress in prosperity has indeed been the wonder of the world; but this prosperity has done much to counteract the ennobling influence of free institutions. The peculiar circumstances of the country and of our times have poured in upon us a torrent of wealth; and human nature has not been strong enough for the assault of such severe temptation. Prosperity has become dearer than freedom. Government is regarded more as a means of enriching the country, than of securing private rights. We have become wedded to gain, as our chief good. That, under the predominance of this degrading passion, the higher virtues, the moral independence, the simplicity of manners, the stern uprightness, the self-reverence, the respect for man as man, which are the ornaments and safeguards of a republic, should wither, and give place to selfish calculation and indulgence, to show and extravagance, to anxious, envious, discontented strivings, to wild adventure,

Hosted by Google

and to the gambling spirit of speculation, will surprise no one who has studied human nature. The invasion of Texas by our citizens is a mournful comment on our national morality. Whether without some fiery trial, some signal prostration of our prosperity, we can rise to the force and self-denial of freemen, is a question not easily solved.

There are other alarming views. A spirit of lawlessness pervades the community, which, if not repressed, threatens the dissolution of our present forms of society. Even in the old States, mobs are taking the government into their hands, and a profligate newspaper finds little difficulty in stirring up multitudes to violence. When we look at the parts of the country nearest Texas, we see the arm of the law paralyzed by the passions of the individual. Men take under their own protection the rights which it is the very office of government to secure. The citizen, wearing arms as means of defence, carries with him perpetual proofs of the weakness of the authorities under which he lives. The substitution of self-constituted tribunals for the regular course of justice, and the infliction of immediate punishment in the moment of popular frenzy, are symptoms of a people half reclaimed from barbarism. I know not, that any civilized country on earth has exhibited, during the last year, a spectacle so atrocious, as the burning of a colored man by a slow fire, in the neighbourhood of St. Louis; and this infernal sacrifice was offered not by a few fiends selected from the whole country, but by a crowd gathered from a single spot. Add to all this, the invasions of the rights of speech and of the press by lawless force, the extent and tol-

Hosted by Google

eration of which oblige us to believe, that a considerable portion of our citizens have no comprehension of the first principles of liberty.

It is an undeniable fact, that, in consequence of these and other symptoms, the confidence of many reflecting men in our free institutions is very much impaired. Some despair. That main pillar of public liberty, mutual trust among citizens, is shaken. That we must seek security for property and life in a stronger government is a spreading conviction. Men, who in public talk of the stability of our institutions, whisper their doubts (perhaps their scorn) in private. So common are these apprehensions, that the knowledge of them has reached Europe. Not long ago, I received a letter from an enlightened and fervent friend of liberty, in Great Britain, beseeching me to inform him, how far he was to rely on the representations of one of his countrymen just returned from the United States, who had reported to him, that, in the most respectable society, he had again and again been told, that the experiment of freedom here was a failure, and that faith in our institutions was gone. That the traveller misinterpreted in a measure what he heard, we shall all acknowledge. But is the old enthusiasm of liberty unchilled among us? Is the old jealousy of power as keen and uncompromising? Do not parties more unscrupulously encroach on the constitution and on the rights of minorities? In one respect we must all admit a change. When you and I grew up, what a deep interest pervaded this country in the success of free institutions abroad! With what throbbing hearts did we follow the struggles of the oppressed! How many among

Hosted by Google

us were ready to lay down their lives for the cause of liberty on the earth! And now who cares for free institutions abroad? How seldom does the topic pass men's lips! Multitudes, discouraged by the licentiousness at home, doubt the value of popular institutions, especially in less enlightened countries; whilst greater numbers, locked up in gain, can spare no thought on the struggles of liberty, and, provided they can drive a prosperous trade with foreign nations, care little whether they are bond or free.

I may be thought inclined to draw a dark picture of our moral condition. But at home I am set down among those who hope against hope; and I have never ceased to condemn as a crime the despondence of those, who, lamenting the corruptions of the times, do not lift a finger to withstand it. I am far, very far from despair. I have no fears but such as belong to a friend of freedom. Among dark omens, I see favorable influences, remedial processes, counteracting agencies. I well know, that the vicious part of our system makes more noise and show than the sound. I know, that the prophets of ruin to our institutions are to be found most frequently in the party out of power, and that many dark auguries must be set down to the account of disappointment and irritation. I am sure, too, that imminent peril would wake up the spirit of our fathers in many who slumber in these days of ease and security. It is also true, that, with all our defects, there is a wider diffusion of intelligence, moral restraint, and self-respect among us, than through any other community. Still, I am compelled to acknowledge an extent of corruption among us, which menaces freedom and our dearest in-

Hosted by Google

terests; and a policy, which will give new and enduring impulse to corruption, which will multiply indefinitely public and private crime, ought to be reprobated as the sorest calamity we can incur. Freedom is fighting her battles in the world with sufficient odds against her. Let us not give new chances to her foes.

That the cause of republicanism is suffering abroad, through the defects and crimes of our countrymen, is as true, as that it is regarded with increased skepticism among ourselves. Abroad, republicanism is identified with the United States, and it is certain that the American name has not risen of late in the world. It so happens, that, whilst writing, I have received a newspaper from England, in which Lynch law is as familiarly associated with our country, as if it were one of our establishments. We are quoted as monuments of the degrading tendencies of popular institutions. When I visited England fifteen years ago, republican sentiments were freely expressed to me. I should probably hear none now. Men's minds seem to be returning to severer principles of government; and this country is responsible for a part of this change. It is believed abroad, that property is less secure among us, order less stable, law less revered, social ties more easily broken, religion less enforced, life held less sacred, than in other countries. Undoubtedly, the prejudices of foreign nations, the interests of foreign governments, have led to gross exaggeration of evils here. The least civilized parts of the country are made to represent the whole, and occasional atrocities are construed into habits. But who does not feel, that we have given cause of reproach? and shall we fix this reproach, and exas-

Hosted by Google

perate it into indignation and hatred, by adopting a policy against which the moral sentiments of the Christian world revolt? Shall we make the name of republic "a stench in the nostrils" of all nations, by employing our power to build up and spread slavery, by resisting the efforts of other countries for its abolition, by falling behind monarchies in reverence for the rights of men?

When we look forward to the probable growth of this country; when we think of the millions of human beings who are to spread over our present territory; of the career of improvement and glory opened to this new people; of the impulse which free institutions, if prosperous, may be expected to give to philosophy, religion, science, literature, and arts; of the vast field in which the experiment is to be made, of what the unfettered powers of man may achieve; of the bright page of history which our fathers have filled, and of the advantages under which their toils and virtues have placed us for carrying on their work; when we think of all this, can we help, for a moment, surrendering ourselves to bright visions of our country's glory, before which all the glories of the past are to fade away? Is it presumption to say, that, if just to ourselves and all nations, we shall be felt through this whole continent, that we shall spread our language, institutions, and civilization through a wider space than any nation has yet filled with a like beneficent influence? And are we prepared to barter these hopes, this sublime moral empire, for conquests by force? Are we prepared to sink to the level of unprincipled nations, to content ourselves with a vulgar, guilty greatness, to adopt in our

Hosted by Google

youth maxims and ends which must brand our future with sordidness, oppression, and shame? This country cannot without peculiar infamy run the common race of national rapacity. Our origin, institutions, and position are peculiar, and all favor an upright, honorable course. We have not the apologies of nations hemmed in by narrow bounds, or threatened by the overshadowing power of ambitious neighbours. If we surrender ourselves to a selfish policy, we shall sin almost without temptation, and forfeit opportunities of greatness vouchsafed to no other people, for a prize below contempt.

I have alluded to the want of wisdom with which we are accustomed to speak of our destiny as a people. We are *destined* (that is the word) to overspread North America; and, intoxicated with the idea, it matters little to us how we accomplish our fate. To spread, to supplant others, to cover a boundless space, this seems our ambition, no matter what influence we spread with us. Why cannot we rise to noble conceptions of our destiny? Why do we not feel, that our work as a nation is, to carry freedom, religion, science, and a nobler form of human nature over this continent? and why do we not remember, that to diffuse these blessings we must first cherish them in our own borders; and that whatever deeply and permanently corrupts us will make our spreading influence a curse, not a blessing, to this new world? It is a common idea in Europe, that we are destined to spread an inferior civilization over North America; that our slavery and our absorption in gain and outward interests mark us out, as fated to fall behind the old world in the higher im-

Hosted by Google

provements of human nature, in the philosophy, the refinements, the enthusiasm of literature and the arts, which throw a lustre round other countries. I am not prophet enough to read our fate. I believe, indeed, that we are to make our futurity for ourselves. I believe, that a nation's destiny lies in its character, in the principles which govern its policy and bear rule in the hearts of its citizens. I take my stand on God's moral and eternal law. A nation, renouncing and defying this, cannot be free, cannot be great.

Religious men in this community, and they are many, are peculiarly bound to read the future history of their country, not in the flattering promises of politicians, but in the warnings of conscience, and in the declaration of God's word. They know, and should make it known, that nations cannot consolidate free institutions and secure a lasting prosperity by crime. They know, that retribution awaits communities as well as individuals; and they should tremble amidst their hopes, when, with this solemn truth on their minds, they look round on their country. Let them consider the clearness with which God's will is now made known, and the signal blessings of his Providence poured out on this people, with a profusion accorded to no other under heaven; and then let them consider our ingratitude for his boundless gifts, our abuse of his beneficence to sensual and selfish gratification, our unmeasured, unrighteous love of gain, our unprincipled party-spirit, and our faithless and cruel wrongs toward the Indian race; and can they help fearing, that the cup of wrath is filling for this people? Men, buried in themselves and in outward interests, atheists in heart and life, may scoff

Hosted by Google

at the doctrine of national retribution, because they do not see God's hand stretched out to destroy guilty communities. But does not all history teach, that the unlicensed passions of a guilty people are more terrible ministers of punishment than miraculous inflictions? To chastise and destroy, God needs not interfere by supernatural judgments. In every community, there are elements of discord, revolution, and ruin, pent up in the human soul, which need only to be quickened and set free by a new order of events, to shake and convulse the whole social fabric. Never were the causes of disastrous change in human affairs more active than at the present moment. Society heaves and trembles, from the struggle of opposing principles, as the earth quakes through the force of central fires. This is not the time for presumption, for defying Heaven by new crimes, for giving a new range to cupidity and ambition. Men who fear God must fear for their country, in this "day of provocation," and they will be false to their country, if they look on passively, and see without remonstrance the consummation of a great national crime, which cannot fail to bring down awful retribution.

I am aware, that there are those, who, on reading these pages, will smile at my simplicity in urging moral and religious motives, disinterested considerations, lofty aims, on a politician. The common notion is, that the course of a man embarked in public life will be shaped by the bearing of passing events on his immediate popularity; that virtue and freedom, however they may round his periods in the senate, have little influence on his vote. But I do not believe, that public life is necessarily degrading, or that a statesman is incapable of

Hosted by Google

looking above himself. Public life appeals to the noblest, as well as basest principles of human nature. It holds up for pursuit enduring fame, as well as the notoriety of the passing hour. By giving opportunities of acting on the vast and permanent interests of a nation, it often creates a deep sense of responsibility, and a generous self-oblivion. I have too much faith in human nature to distrust the influence of great truths and high motives on any class of men, especially on men of commanding intelligence. There is a congeniality between vast powers of thought and dignity of purpose. None are so capable of sacrificing themselves, as those who have most to sacrifice, who, in offering themselves, make the greatest offerings to humanity. With this conviction, I am not discouraged by the anticipated smiles and scoffs of those, who will think, that, in insisting on national purity as the essential condition of freedom and greatness, I have "preached" to the winds. To you, Sir, rectitude is not an empty name, nor will a measure, fraught with lasting corruption and shame to your country, seem to you any thing but a fearful calamity.

I have now finished the task which I have felt myself bound to undertake. That I have escaped all error, I cannot hope. That I may have fallen into occasional exaggeration, I ought perhaps to fear, from the earnestness with which I have written. But of the essential truth of the views here communicated, I cannot doubt. It is exceedingly to be regretted, that the subject of this letter has as yet drawn little attention at the North. The unprecedented pecuniary difficulties,

Hosted by Google

pressing now on the country, have absorbed the public mind. And yet these difficulties, should they be aggravated and continued far beyond what is most dreaded, would be a light national evil, compared with the annexation of Texas to the Union. I trust the people will not slumber on the edge of this precipice, till it shall be too late to reflect and provide for safety. Too much time has been given for the ripening of this unrighteous project. I doubt not, as I have said, that opposition exists to it in the Slave-holding States. This, if manifested in any strength, would immediately defeat it. The other States should raise a voice against it, like the voice of many waters. Party dissensions should be swallowed up in this vast common interest. The will of the people, too strong and fixed to be resisted, should be expressed to Congress, in remonstrances from towns, cities, counties, and legislatures. Let no man, who feels the greatness of the evil which threatens us, satisfy himself with unprofitable regrets; but let each embody his opposition in a form which will give incitement to his neighbours, and act on men in power.

I take it for granted, that those who differ from me will ascribe what I have written to unworthy motives. This is the common mode of parrying unwelcome truths; and it is not without influence, where the author is unknown. May I then be allowed to say, that I have strong reasons for believing, that, among the many defects of this letter, those of unworthy intention are not to be numbered. The reluctance, with which I have written, satisfies me, that I have not been impelled by any headlong passion. Nor can I have been impelled by party-spirit. I am pledged to no party. In truth, I

Hosted by Google

do not feel myself able to form a decisive opinion on the subjects, which now inflame and divide the country, and which can be very little understood except by men who have made a study of commerce and finance. As to having written from that most common motive, the desire of distinction, I may be permitted to say, that, to win the public ear, I need not engage in a controversy which will expose me to unmeasured reproach. May I add, that I have lived long enough to learn the worth of applause. Could I, indeed, admit the slightest hope of securing to myself that enduring fame, which future ages award to the lights and benefactors of their race, I could not but be stirred by the prospect. But notoriety among contemporaries, obtained by taking part in the irritating discussions of the day, I would no stretch out a hand to secure.

I cannot but fear, that the earnestness with which I have written may seem to indicate an undue excitement of mind. But I have all along felt distinctly the importance of calmness, and have seemed to myself to maintain it. I have prepared this letter, not amidst the goadings, irritations, and feverish tumults of a crowded city, but in the stillness of retirement, amid scenes of peace and beauty. Hardly an hour has passed, in which I have not sought relief from the exhaustion of writing, by walking abroad amidst God's works, which seldom fail to breathe tranquillity, and which, by their harmony and beneficence, continually cheer me, as emblems and prophecies of a more harmonious and blessed state of human affairs than has yet been known. Perhaps some will object it to me, that a man, living in such retirement, unfits himself to judge of passing events, that he is

Hosted by Google

prone to substitute his visions for realities, and to legislate for a world which does not exist. I acknowledge the danger of such a position. On the other hand, it is equally true, that the man, who lives in a crowd and receives perpetual impulse from its prejudices and passions, who connects himself with a party and looks to it for reward, cannot easily keep his mind open to truth, or sacrifice the interests of the moment to everlasting principles and the enduring welfare of his country. Everywhere our frail nature is severely tried. All circumstances have their perils. In every condition, there are biases to wrong judgment and incitements to wrong action. Through such discipline, we are to make our way to truth and perfection. The dread of these dangers must not keep us inactive. Having sought to understand the difficulties in our respective paths, and having done what we can to learn the truth, we must commit ourselves to our convictions without fear, expressing them in word and action, and leaving results to Him, who will accept our pure purpose, and whose providence is the pledge of the ultimate triumphs of humanity and uprightness.

You and I, my dear Sir, are approaching that period of life, when the passions lose much of their force, when disappointment, bereavement, the fall of our contemporaries on the right hand and the left, and long experience of the emptiness of human favor and of the instability of all earthly goods, are teaching us the lofty lessons of superiority to the fleeting opinion of our day, of reliance on the everlasting law of Right, of reference to a Higher Judge than man, of solemn anticipation of our final account. Permit me to close this letter, with desiring

Hosted by Google

for you in your commanding station, what I ask for myself in private life, that we may be faithful to ourselves, to our country, to mankind, to the benevolent principles of the Christian faith, and to the common Father of the whole human race.

Very respectfully,

Your friend and servant,

WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

NEWPORT, R. I., *August* 1, 1837.

Hosted by Google

NOTE.

A few remarks, which have been suggested since the completion of the preceding letter, I shall throw into a note.

The recognition of the independence of Texas by our government is to be lamented, as unbecomingly hasty, and as a violation of the principle adopted by Mr. Monroe, in regard to the Spanish colonies. "These new states," he says, "had completely established their independence, before we acknowledged them." We have recognised Texas as a nation, having all the attributes of sovereignty, and competent to the discharge of all the obligations of an independent state. And what is Texas? A collection of a few settlements, which would vanish at once, were a Mexican army of any force to enter the country. One decisive victory would scatter all Texas like a horde of Tartars, and not a trace of its institutions and population would remain. We have been accustomed to think of a nation as something permanent, as having some fixtures, some lasting bond of union. There would be nothing to hold Texas together, were her single, small army to be routed in one battle. To send a minister plenipotentiary to such a handful of people, made up chiefly of our own citizens, is to degrade the forms of national intercourse. This new republic, with its president and diplomatic corps, has been called a Farce. But the tragic element prevails so much over the farcical in this whole business, that we cannot laugh at it. The movements of our government in regard to Texas

Hosted by Google

are chiefly interesting, as they are thought to indicate a disposition favorable to its annexation to our country. But we will not believe, that the government is resolved on this great wrong, unless we are compelled so to do. We hope, that the present administration will secure the confidence of good men by well-considered and upright measures, looking beyond momentary interests, to the lasting peace, order, and strength of the country.

There is another objection to the annexation of Texas, which, after our late experience, is entitled to attention. This possession will involve us in new Indian wars. Texas, besides being open to the irruption of the tribes within our territories, has a tribe of its own, the Camanches, which is described as more formidable than any in North America. Such foes are not to be coveted. The Indians! that ominous word, which ought to pierce the conscience of this nation, more than the savage war-cry pierces the ear. The Indians! Have we not inflicted and endured evil enough in our intercourse with this wretched people, to abstain from new wars with them? Is the tragedy of Florida to be acted again and again in our own day, and in our children's?

In addition to what I have said of the constitutional objections to the annexation of Texas to our country, I would observe, that we may infer, from the history and language of the Constitution, that our national Union was so far from being intended to spread slavery over new countries, that, had the possibility of such a result been anticipated, decided provisions would have been introduced for its prevention. It is worthy of remark, how anxious the framers of that instrument were to exclude from it the word Slavery. They were not willing, that this feature of our social system should be betrayed in the construction of our free government. A stranger might read it, without suspecting the existence of this

Hosted by Google

institution among us. Were slavery to be wholly abolished here, no change would be needed in the Constitution, nor would any part become obsolete, except an obscure clause, which, in apportioning the representatives, provides that there shall be added to the whole number of free persons "three fifths of other persons." Slavery is studiously thrown into the back-ground. How little did our forefathers suppose, that it was to become a leading interest of the government, to which our peace at home and abroad was to be made a sacrifice!

I have said, that I desire no political union with communities bent on spreading and perpetuating slavery. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this was not intended to express a desire to decline friendly intercourse with the members of those communities. Individuals, who have received from their ancestors some pernicious prejudice or institution, may still, in their general spirit, be disinterested and just. Our testimony against the wrong which such men practise, is not to be stifled or impaired by the feelings of interest or attachment which they inspire; nor, on the other hand, must this wrong be spread by our imaginations over their whole characters, so as to seem their sole attribute, and so as to hide all their claims to regard. In an age of reform, one of the hardest duties is, to be inflexibly hostile to the long-rooted corruptions of society, and at the same time to be candid and just to those who uphold them. It is true, that, with the most friendly feelings, we shall probably give offence to those, who are interested in abuses which we condemn. But we are not on this account absolved from the duty of cultivating and expressing kindness and justice, of laying strong restraint on our passions, and of avoiding all needless provocation.

The speech of Mr. Adams on the subject of the preceding letter, delivered in Congress, in December, 1835,

Hosted by Google

should be republished and circulated. It deserves to be read as a specimen of parliamentary eloquence; and its moral and political views are worthy of its eminent author.

There seems to be an apprehension at the South, that the Free States, should they obtain the ascendency, might be disposed to use the powers of the government for the abolition of slavery. On this point, there is but one feeling at the North. The Free States feel, that they have no more right to abolish slavery in the Slave-holding States than in a foreign country. They regard the matter as wholly out of their reach. They, indeed, claim the right of setting forth the evils of slavery, as of any other pernicious and morally wrong institution. But the thought of touching the laws which established it in any State, they reject without a discordant voice. In regard to the District of Columbia, many of us feel, that slavery continues there by the action of *all* the States, that the Free States, therefore, are responsible for it; and we maintain that it is most unreasonable, that an institution should be sustained by those who hold it to be immoral and pernicious. But we feel no such responsibility for slavery in the Slave-holding States. These States must determine for themselves how long it shall continue, and by what means it shall be abolished. We solemnly urge them to use their power for its removal; but nothing would tempt us to wrest the power from them, if we could. The South has fears, that the Free States may be hurried away by "enthusiasm" into usurpation of unconstitutional powers on the subject. One is tempted to smile at the want of acquaintance with the North, which such an apprehension betrays. This enthusiasm, to endanger the South, must spread through all the Free States; for, as the slave-holders are unanimous, nothing but a like unanimity in their opponents can expose them to harm. And is it pos-

Hosted by Google

sible, that a large number of communities, spread over a vast surface, having a diversity of interests, and all absorbed in the pursuit of gain, to a degree, perhaps, without a parallel, should be driven by a moral, philanthropic enthusiasm, into violations of a national compact, by which their peace and prosperity would be put in peril, and into combined and lawless efforts against other communities, with whom they sustain exceedingly profitable connexions, and from whom they could not be sundered without serious loss? Whoever is acquainted with the Free States knows, that the excesses, to which they are exposed, are not so much those of enthusiasm, as of caution and worldly prudence. The patience, with which they have endured recent violent measures directed against their citizens, shows little propensity to rashness. The danger is, not so much that they will invade the rights of other members of the confederacy, as that they will be indifferent to their own.

I have spoken in this letter of the estimation in which this country is held abroad. I hope I shall not be numbered among those, too common here, who are irritably alive to the opinions of other nations, to the censures and misrepresentations of travellers. To a great and growing people, how insignificant is the praise or blame of a traveller or a nation! "None of these things move me." But one thing does move me. It is a sore evil, that freedom should be blasphemed, that republican institutions should forfeit the confidence of mankind, through the unfaithfulness of this people to their trust.

In reviewing this letter, I perceive that I have used the strong language, in which the apprehension of great evils naturally expresses itself. I hope this will not be construed as betokening any anxieties or misgivings in regard to the issues of passing events. I place a cheerful trust in Providence. The triumphs in evil, which men

Hosted by Google

call great, are but clouds passing over the serene and everlasting heavens. Public men may, in craft or passion, decree violence and oppression. But silently, irresistibly, they and their works are swept away. A voice of encouragement comes to us from the ruins of the past, from the humiliations of the proud, from the prostrate thrones of conquerors, from the baffled schemes of statesmen, from the reprobation with which the present age looks back on the unrighteous policy of former times. Such sentence the future will pass on present wrongs. Men, measures, and all earthly interests pass away ; but Principles are Eternal. Truth, justice, and goodness partake of the omnipotence and immutableness of God, whose essence they are. In these it becomes us to place a calm, joyful trust, in the darkest hour

Hosted by Google

LETTER ON CATHOLICISM,

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE "WESTERN MESSENGER,"

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

ON CATHOLICISM.

BOSTON, *June*, 1836.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have received your letter, expressing a very earnest desire that I would make some contribution to the pages of the "Western Messenger." Your appeal is too strong to be resisted. I feel that I must send you something, though circumstances, which I cannot control, do not allow me to engage in any elaborate discussion. I have therefore resolved to write you a letter, with the same freedom which I should use, if writing not for the public, but to a friend. Perhaps it may meet the wants, and suit the frank spirit of the West, more than a regular essay. But judge for yourself, and do what you will with my hasty thoughts.

I begin with expressing my satisfaction in your having planted yourself in the West. I am glad for your own sake, as well as for the sake of the cause you have adopted. I say, your own sake. You have chosen the good part. The first question to be asked by a young man entering into active life, is, in what situation he can find the greatest scope and excitement to his

Hosted by Google

powers and good affections? That sphere is the best for a man, in which he can best unfold the faculties of a Man, in which he can do justice to his whole nature; in which his intellect, heart, conscience, will be called into the most powerful life. I am always discouraged when I hear a young man asking for the easiest condition, when I see him looking out for some beaten path, in which he may move on mechanically, and with the least expense of thought or feeling. The young minister sometimes desires to become a fixture in an established congregation, which is bound to its place of worship by obstinate ties of habit, and which can therefore be kept together with little effort of his own. If the congregation happens to be what is called a respectable one, that is, if it happens so far to regard the rules of worldly decorum as never to shock him by immoralities, and never to force him into any new or strenuous exertion for its recovery, so much the better. Such a minister is among the most pitiable members of the community. Happily this extreme case is rare. But the case is not rare of those, who, wishing to do good, still desire to reconcile usefulness with all the comforts of life, who shrink from the hazards, which men take in other pursuits, who want the spirit of enterprise, who prefer to reap where others have sowed, and to linger round the places of their nativity. At a time when men of other professions pour themselves into the new parts of the country, and are seeking their fortunes with buoyant spirits, and overflowing hopes, the minister seems little inclined to seek what is better than fortune in untried fields of labor. Of all men, the minister should be first to inquire, where shall I find the circumstances most fitted to wake up my whole soul, to task

Hosted by Google

all my faculties, to inspire a profound interest, to carry me out of myself? I believe *you* have asked yourself this question, and I think you have answered it wisely. You have thrown yourself into a new country, where there are admirable materials, but where a congregation is to be created by your own faithfulness and zeal. Not even a foundation is laid, on which you can build. There are no mechanical habits among the people, which the minister can use as labor-saving machines, which will do much of his work for him, which will draw people to church whether he meets their wants or not. Still more, there are no rigid rules, binding you down to specific modes of action, cramping your energies, warring with your individuality. You may preach in your own way, preach from your observation of the effects produced on a free-speaking people. Tradition does not take the place of your own reason. In addition to this, you see and feel the pressing need of religious instruction, in a region where religious institutions are in their infancy. That under such circumstances, a man who starts with the true spirit will make progress, can hardly be doubted. You have peculiar trials, but in these you find impulses, which, I trust, are to carry you forward to greater usefulness, and to a higher action of the whole soul.

Boston has sometimes been called the Paradise of ministers; and undoubtedly the respect in which the profession is held, and the intellectual helps afforded here, give some reason for the appellation. But there are disadvantages also, and one in particular, to which you are not exposed. Shall I say a word of evil of this good city of Boston? Among all its virtues it does not abound in a tolerant spirit. The yoke of opinion is a

Hosted by Google

heavy one, often crushing individuality of judgment and action. A censorship, unfriendly to free exertion, is exercised over the pulpit as well as over other concerns. No city in the world is governed so little by a police, and so much by mutual inspection, and what is called public sentiment. We stand more in awe of one another, than most people. Opinion is less individual, or runs more into masses, and often rules with a rod of iron. Undoubtedly opinion, when enlightened, lofty, pure, is a useful sovereign; but in the present imperfect state of society, it has its evils as well as benefits. It suppresses the grosser vices, rather than favors the higher virtues. It favors public order, rather than originality of thought, moral energy, and spiritual life. To prescribe its due bounds, is a very difficult problem. Were its restraints wholly removed, the decorum of the pulpit would be endangered; but that these restraints are excessive in this city, and especially in our denomination, that they often weigh oppressively on the young minister, and that they often take from ministers of all ages the courage, confidence, and authority which their high mission should inspire, cannot, I fear, be denied. The minister here, on entering the pulpit, too often feels, that he is to be judged rather than to judge; that instead of meeting sinful men, who are to be warned or saved, he is to meet critics to be propitiated or disarmed. He feels, that should he trust himself to his heart, speak without book, and consequently break some law of speech, or be hurried into some daring hyperbole, he should find little mercy. Formerly Felix trembled before Paul; now the successor of Paul more frequently trembles. Foreigners generally set down as one of our distinctions, the awe in which we stand of

Hosted by Google

opinion, the want of freedom of speech, the predominance of caution and calculation over impulse. This feature of our society exempts it from some dangers; and those persons who see only ruin in the reforming spirit of the times, will prize it as our best characteristic. Be this as it may, one thing is sure, that it does not give energy to the ministry, or favor the nobler action or higher products of the mind. Your situation gives you greater freedom. You preach, I understand, wholly without notes. In this you may carry your liberty too far. Writing is one of the great means of giving precision, clearness, consistency, and energy to thought. Every other sermon, I think, should be written, if circumstances allow it. But he who only preaches from notes, will never do justice to his own powers and feelings. The deepest fountains of eloquence within him will not be unsealed. He will never know the full power given him over his fellow-creatures.

The great danger to a minister at this time is the want of life, the danger of being dead while he lives. Brought up where Christianity is established, he is in danger of receiving it as a tradition. Brought up, where a routine of duty is marked out for him, and a certain style of preaching imposed, he is in danger of preaching from tradition. Ministers are strongly tempted to say what they are expected to say. Accordingly their tones and looks too often show, that they understand but superficially what is meant by their words. You see that they are talking of that which is not *real* to them. This danger of lifelessness is great in old congregations, made up of people of steady habits and respectable characters. The minister in such a case is apt to feel as if his hearers needed no mighty change,

Hosted by Google

and as if his work were accomplished, when his truisms, expressed with more or less propriety, are received with due respect. He ought to feel, that the people may be spiritually dead with their regular habits, as he may be with his regular preaching; that both may need to be made alive. It is the advantage of such a situation as you are called to fill, that you can do nothing without life. A machine in a western pulpit cannot produce even the show of an effect. The people may be less enlightened than we are, more irregular in habits, more defective in character; but they must have living men to speak to them, and must hear a voice which, whether true or erring, still comes from the soul, or they cannot be brought to hear. This is no small compensation for many disadvantages.

This Life of which I speak, though easily recognised by a congregation, cannot be easily described by them, just as the most ignorant man can distinguish a living from a dead body, but knows very little in what vitality consists. A common mistake is, that Life in the minister is strong emotion. But it consists much more in the clear perception, the deep conviction of the Reality of religion, the *reality* of virtue, of man's spiritual nature, of God, of Immortality, of Heaven. The tone which most proves a minister to be alive, is that of calm, entire confidence in the *truth* of what he says, the tone of a man who speaks of what he has seen and handled, the peculiar tone which belongs to one who has come fresh from what he describes, to whom the future world is as substantial as the present, who does not echo what others say of the human soul, but feels his own spiritual nature as others feel their bodies, and to whom God is as truly present as the nearest fellow-creature. Strong

Hosted by Google

emotion in the pulpit is too often a fever caught by sympathy, or a fervor worked up for the occasion, or a sensibility belonging more to the nerves than the mind, and excited by vague views which fade away before the calm reason. Hence enthusiasts often become skeptics. The great sign of life is to see and feel, that there is something real, substantial, immortal, in Christian virtue; to be conscious of the reality and nearness of your relations to God and the invisible world. This is the life, which the minister needs, and which it is his great work to communicate. My hope is, that by sending ministers into new situations, where new wants cry to them for supply, a living power may be awakened, to which a long established routine of labors is not favorable, and which may spread beyond them to their brethren.

I pass now to another subject. We hear much of the Catholic religion in the West, and of its threatening progress. There are not a few here who look upon this alarm as a pious fraud, who consider the cry of "No Popery," as set up by a particular sect to attract to itself distinction and funds; but fear is so natural, and a panic spreads so easily, that I see no necessity of resorting to so unkind an explanation. It must be confessed that Protestantism enters on the warfare with Popery under some disadvantages, and may be expected to betray some consciousness of weakness. Most Protestant sects are built on the Papal foundation. Their creeds and excommunications embody the grand idea of Infallibility, as truly as the decrees of Trent and the Vatican; and if the people must choose between different infallibilities, there is much to incline them to that of Rome. This has age, the majority of votes, more

Hosted by Google

daring assumption, and bolder denunciation on its side. The popes of our different sects are certainly less imposing to the imagination than the Pope at Rome.

I trust, however, that, with these advantages, Catholicism is still not very formidable. It has something more to do, than to fight with sects; its great foe is the progress of society. The creation of dark times, it cannot stand before the light. In this country in particular, it finds no coadjutors in any circumstances, passions, or institutions. Catholicism is immovable, and movement and innovation are the order of the day. It rejects the idea of melioration, and the passion for improvement is inflaming all minds. It takes its stand in the Past, and this generation are living in the Future. It clings to forms, which the mind has outgrown. It will not modify doctrines in which the intelligence of the age cannot but recognise the stamp of former ignorance. It forbids free inquiry, and inquiry is the spirit of the age, the boldest inquiry, stopping nowhere, invading every region of thought. Catholicism wrests from the people the right to choose their own ministers, and the right of election is the very essence of our institutions. It establishes an aristocratical priesthood, and the whole people are steeped in republicanism. It withholds the Scriptures, and the age is a reading one, and reads the more what is forbidden. Catholicism cannot comprehend that the past is not the present, cannot comprehend the revolution which the art of printing and the revival of learning have effected. Its memory seems not to come down lower than the middle ages. It aims to impose restraints on thought, which were comparatively easy before the press was set in motion, and labors to shore up institutions, in utter unconscious

Hosted by Google

ness that the state of society, and the modes of thinking on which they rested, have passed away.

The political revolutions of the times are enough to seal the death-warrant of Catholicism, but it has to encounter a far more important spiritual revolution. Catholicism belongs to what may be called the dogmatical age of Christianity, the age when it was thought our religion might be distilled into a creed, which would prove an elixir of life to whoever would swallow it. We have now come to learn, that Christianity is not a dogma, but a spirit, that its essence is the spirit of its divine founder, that it is of little importance what church a man belongs to, or what formula of doctrines he subscribes, that nothing is important but the supreme love, choice, pursuit of moral perfection, shining forth in the life and teachings of Christ. This is the true Catholic doctrine, the creed of the true Church, gathering into one spiritual communion all good and holy men of all ages and regions, and destined to break down all the earthly clay-built, gloomy barriers, which now separate the good from one another. To this great idea of reason and revelation, of the understanding and heart, of experience and philosophy, to this great truth of an advanced civilization, Catholicism stands in direct hostility. How sure then is its fall!

The great foe of the Romish Church is not the theologian. *He* might be imprisoned, chained, burned. It is human nature waking up to a consciousness of its powers, catching a glimpse of the perfection for which it was made, beginning to respect itself, thirsting for free action and developement, learning through a deep consciousness that there is something diviner than forms, or churches, or creeds, recognising in Jesus Christ its

Hosted by Google

own celestial model, and claiming kindred with all who have caught any portion of his spiritual life and disinterested love; here, here is the great enemy of Catholicism. I look confidently to the ineradicable, ever-unfolding principles of human nature, for the victory over all superstitions. Reason and conscience, the powers by which we discern the true and the right, are immortal as their author. Oppressed for ages, they yet live. Like the central fires of the earth, they can heave up mountains. It is encouraging to see under what burdens and clouds they have made their way; and we must remember, that, by every new developement, they are brought more into contact with the life-giving, omnipotent truth and character of Jesus Christ. It makes me smile, to hear immortality claimed for Catholicism or Protestantism, or for any past interpretations of Christianity; as if the human soul had exhausted itself in its infant efforts, or as if the men of one or a few generations could bind the energy of human thought and affection for ever. A theology at war with the laws of physical nature would be a battle of no doubtful issue. The laws of our spiritual nature give still less chance of success to the system, which would thwart or stay them. The progress of the individual and of society, which has shaken the throne of Rome, is not an accident, not an irregular spasmodic effort, but the natural movement of the soul. Catholicism must fall before it. In truth, it is very much fallen already. It exists, and will long exist as an outward institution. But compare the Catholicism of an intelligent man of the nineteenth century with what it was in the tenth. The name, the letter remain, — how changed the spirit! The silent reform spreading in the very

Hosted by Google

bosom of Catholicism, is as important as the reformation of the sixteenth century, and in truth more effectual.

Catholicism has always hoped for victory over Protestantism, on the ground of the dissensions of Protestants. But its anticipations have not approached fulfilment, and they show us how the most sagacious err, when they attempt to read futurity. I have long since learned to hear with composure the auguries of the worldy wise. The truth is, that the dissensions of Protestantism go far to constitute its strength. Through them its spirit, which is freedom, the only spirit which Rome cannot conquer, is kept alive. Had its members been organized, and bound into a single church, it would have become a despotism as unrelenting, and corrupt, and hopeless as Rome. But this is not all. Protestantism, by being broken into a great variety of sects, has adapted itself to the various modifications of human nature. Every sect has embodied religion in a form suited to some large class of minds. It has met some want, answered to some great principle of the soul, and thus every new denomination has been a new standard, under which to gather and hold fast a host against Rome. One of the great arts, by which Catholicism spread and secured its dominion, was its wonderful flexibleness, its most skilful adaptation of itself to the different tastes, passions, wants of men; and to this means of influence and dominion, Protestantism could oppose nothing, but variety of sects. I do not recollect, that I ever saw this feature of Catholicism brought out distinctly, and yet nothing in the system has impressed me more strongly. The Romish religion calls itself one, but it has a singular variety of forms

Hosted by Google

and aspects. For the lover of forms and outward religion, it has a gorgeous ritual. To the mere man of the world, it shows a pope on the throne, bishops in palaces, and all the splendor of earthly dominion. At the same time, for the self-denying, ascetic, mystical, and fanatical, it has all the forms of monastic life. To him, who would scourge himself into godliness, it offers a whip. For him who would starve himself into spirituality, it provides the mendicant convents of St. Francis. For the anchorite, it prepares the death-like silence of La Trappe. To the passionate young woman, it presents the raptures of St. Theresa, and the marriage of St. Catharine with her Saviour. For the restless pilgrim, whose piety needs greater variety than the cell of the monk, it offers shrines, tombs, relics, and other holy places in Christian lands, and above all, the holy sepulchre near Calvary. To the generous, sympathizing enthusiast, it opens some fraternity or sisterhood of Charity. To him, who inclines to take heaven by violence, it gives as much penance as he can ask; and to the mass of men, who wish to reconcile the two worlds, it promises a purgatory, so far softened down by the masses of the priest and the prayers of the faithful, that its fires can be anticipated without overwhelming dread. This composition of forces in the Romish Church seems to me a wonderful monument of skill. When, in Rome, the traveller sees by the side of the purple, lackeyed cardinal, the begging friar; when, under the arches of St. Peter, he sees a coarsely dressed monk holding forth to a ragged crowd; or when, beneath a Franciscan church, adorned with the most precious works of art, he meets a charnel-house, where the bones of the dead brethren are built into walls, be-

Hosted by Google

tween which the living walk to read their mortality; he is amazed, if he gives himself time for reflection, at the infinite variety of machinery which Catholicism has brought to bear on the human mind; at the sagacity with which it has adapted itself to the various tastes and propensities of human nature. Protestantism attains this end by more simple, natural, and in the main more effectual ways. All the great principles of our nature are represented in different sects, which have on the whole a keener passion for self-aggrandizement than the various orders in the Romish Church, and thus men of all varieties of mind find something congenial, find a class to sympathize with.

And, here, I cannot but observe, that Episcopacy renders good service to the Protestant cause. Without being thoroughly Protestant, it is especially efficient against Catholicism; and this good work it does by its very proximity to Rome. From the wide diffusion and long continuance of Catholicism, we may be sure that it embodies some great idea, and answers some want, which is early and powerfully developed in the progress of civilization. There is of consequence a tendency to Catholicism in society, though more and more restrained by higher tendencies. Happily, Episcopacy is built on the same great idea, but expresses it in a more limited and rational form. It is Catholicism improved, or mother church with a lower mitre and a less royal air; and by meeting the want which carries men to the Romish Church, stops numbers on their way to it. Hence, Catholicism hates Episcopacy more than any other form of dissent. Sects are apt to hate each other in proportion to their proximity. The old proverb that two of a trade cannot agree, applies to reli-

Hosted by Google

gion as strongly as to common life. — The amount is, that Catholicism derives little aid from Protestant divisions. In an age as unimproved in Christianity as the present, these divisions are promising symptoms. They prevent men from settling down in a rude Christianity. They keep alive inquiry and zeal. They are essential to freedom and progress. Without these, Protestantism would be only a new edition of Catholicism; and the old pope would certainly beat any new one who could be arrayed against him.

Do you ask me, how I think Catholicism may be most successfully opposed? I know but one way. Spread just, natural, ennobling views of religion. Lift men above Catholicism, by showing them the great spiritual purpose of Christianity. Violence will avail nothing. Romanism cannot be burned down, like the convent at Charlestown. That outrage bound every Catholic faster to his church, and attracted to it the sympathies of the good. Neither is Popery to be subdued by virulence and abuse. The priest can call as hard names as the Protestant pastor. Neither do I think that any thing is to be gained by borrowing from the Catholic Church her forms, and similar means of influence. Borrowed forms are peculiarly formal. No sect will be benefited by forms which do not grow from its own spirit. A sect which has true life, will seize by instinct the emblems and rites, which are in accordance with itself; and, without life, it will only find in borrowed rites its winding-sheet. It is not uncommon to hear persons who visit Catholic countries, recommending the introduction of this or that usage of Romanism among ourselves. For example, they enter Catholic churches and see at all hours worshippers be-

Hosted by Google

fore one or another altar, and contrasting with this the desertion of our houses of worship during the week, doubt whether we are as pious, and wish to open the doors of our sanctuaries, that Protestants may at all hours approve themselves as devoted as the Papists. Now such recommendations show a misconception of the true foundation and spirit of Roman usages. In the case before us, nothing is more natural than that Catholics should go to churches or public places to pray. In the first place, in the southern countries of Europe, where Catholicism first took its form, the people live in public. They are an outdoor people. Their domestic occupations go on in the outward air. That they should perform their private devotions in public, is in harmony with all their habits. What a violence it would be to ours! In the next place, the Catholic believes that the church has a peculiar sanctity. A prayer offered from its floor finds its way to heaven more easily than from any other spot. The pernicious superstition of his religion carries him to do the work of his religion in one consecrated place, and therefore he does it the less elsewhere. Again: Catholic churches are attractive from the miraculous virtue ascribed to the images which are worshipped there. Strange, monstrous as the superstition is, yet nothing is more common in Catholic countries than the ascription of this or that supernatural agency to one or another shrine or statue. A saint, worshipped at one place, or under one image, will do more, than if worshipped elsewhere. I recollect asking an Italian, why a certain church of rather humble appearance, in a large city, was so much frequented. He smiled, and told me, that the Virgin, who was adored there, was thought particularly propitious to

Hosted by Google

those who had bought tickets in the lottery. Once more, we can easily conceive why visiting the churches, for daily prayer, has been encouraged by the priesthood. The usage brought the multitude still more under priestly power, and taught them to associate their most secret aspirations of piety with the church. Who, that takes all these circumstances into consideration, can expect Protestants to imitate the Catholics in frequenting the church for secret devotion, or can wish it? Has not Jesus said, "When thou prayest, go into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father, who seeth in secret"? Catholicism says, "When thou prayest, go into the public church, and pray before the multitude." Of the little efficacy of this worship we have too painful proofs. The worship of the churches of Italy is directed chiefly to the Virgin. She is worshipped as *the Virgin*. The great idea of this Catholic deity is purity, chastity; and yet, unless all travellers deceive us, the country where she is worshipped is disfigured by licentiousness, beyond all countries of the civilized world. I return to my position. We need borrow nothing from Catholicism. Episcopacy retained (did not borrow) as much of the ritual of that church as is wanted in the present age, for those among us who have Catholic propensities. Other sects, if they need forms, must originate them, and this they must do not mechanically, but from the promptings of the spiritual life, from a thirst for new modes of manifesting their religious hopes and aspirations. Woe to that church, which looks round for forms to wake it up to spiritual life. The dying man is not to be revived by a new dress, however graceful. The disease of a languid sect is too deep to be healed by ceremonies. It

Hosted by Google

needs deeper modes of cure. Let it get life, and it will naturally create the emblems or rites which it needs to express and maintain its spiritual force.

The great instrument of influence and dominion in the Catholic Church, is one which we should shudder to borrow, but which may still give important hints as to the means of promoting religion. I refer to Confession. Nothing too bad can be said of this. By laying open the secrets of all hearts to the priest, it makes the priest the master of all. Still, to a good man it gives the power of doing good, a power, which, I doubt not, is often conscientiously used. It gives to the religious teacher an access to men's minds and conscience, such as the pulpit does not furnish. Instead of scattering generalities among the crowd, he can administer to each soul the very instruction, warning, encouragement it needs. In Catholic countries there is little preaching, nor is it necessary. The confessional is far more powerful than the pulpit. And what do we learn from this? That Protestants should adopt confession? No. But the question arises, whether the great principle of confession, that on which its power rests, viz. access to the individual mind, may not be used more than it is by Protestant teachers; whether such access may not be gained by honorable and generous means, and so used as to be guarded against abuse. Preaching is now our chief reliance; but preaching is an arrow which shoots over many heads, and flies wide of the hearts of more. Its aim is too vague to do much execution. It is melancholy to think how little clear knowledge on the subject of duty and religion, is communicated by the pulpit, and how often the emotion which it excites, for want of clear

Hosted by Google

views, for want of wisdom, runs into morbidness or excess. No art, no science is taught so vaguely as religion from the pulpit. No book is so read or expounded as the Bible is, that is, in minute fragments, and without those helps of method, by which all other branches are taught. Is not a freer, easier, opener communication with his pupils needed, than the minister does or can hold from the pulpit? Should not modes of teaching and intercourse be adopted, by which he can administer truth to different minds, according to their various capacities and wants. Must not he rely less on preaching, and more on more familiar communication.

This question becomes of more importance, because it is very plain that preaching is becoming less and less efficacious. Preaching is not what it was in the first age of Christianity. Then, when there was no printing, comparatively no reading, Christianity could only be spread by the living voice. Hence to preach became synonymous with teaching. It was the great means of access to the multitude. Now the press preaches incomparably more than the pulpit. Through this, all are permitted to preach. Woman, if she may not speak in the church, may speak from the printing room, and her touching expositions of religion, not learned in theological institutions, but in the schools of affection, of sorrow, of experience, of domestic change, sometimes make their way to the heart more surely than the minister's homilies. The result is, that preaching does not hold the place now, which it had in dark and unrefined ages. The minister addresses from his pulpit many as well educated as himself, and almost every parishioner has at home better sermons than he hears

Hosted by Google

in public. The minister, too, has competitors in the laity, as they are called, who very wisely refuse to leave to him the monopoly of public speaking, and who are encroaching on his province more and more. In this altered condition of the world, the ministry is to undergo important changes. What they must be, I have not time now to inquire. I will only say, that the vagueness which belongs to so much religious instruction from the pulpit, must give place to a teaching which shall meet more the wants of the individual, and the wants of the present state of society. Great principles must be expounded in accommodation to different ages, capacities, stages of improvement, and an intercourse be established by which all classes may be helped to apply them to their own particular conditions. How shall Christianity be brought to bear on the individual, and on society at the present moment, in its present struggles? This is the great question to be solved, and the reply to it will determine the form which the Christian ministry is to take. I imagine, that in seeking the solution of this problem, it will be discovered, that the ministry must have greater freedom than in past times. It will be discovered, that the individual minister must not be rigidly tied down to certain established modes of operation, that he must not be required to cast his preaching into the old mould, to circumscribe himself to the old topics, to keep in motion a machinery which others have invented, but that he will do most good if left to work according to his own nature, according to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within his own breast. I imagine it will be discovered, that, as justice may be administered without a wig, and the executive function without a crown or sceptre, so Christianity may be

Hosted by Google

administered in more natural and less formal ways than have prevailed, and that the minister, in growing less technical, will find religion becoming, to himself and others, a more living reality. I imagine, that our present religious organizations will silently melt away, and that hierarchies will be found no more necessary for religion than for literature, science, medicine, law, or the elegant and useful arts. But I will check these imaginings. The point from which I started was, that Catholicism might teach us one element of an effectual ministry, that the Protestant teacher needs and should seek access to the individual mind, beyond what he now possesses; and the point at which I stop is, that this access is to be so sought and so used, as not to infringe religious liberty, the rights of private judgment, the free action of the individual mind. Nothing but this liberty can secure it from the terrible abuse to which it has been exposed in the Catholic Church.

In the free remarks, which I have now made on certain denominations of Christians, I have been influenced by no unkindness or disrespect towards the individuals who compose them. In all sects I recognise joyfully true disciples of the common Master. Catholicism boasts of some of the best and greatest names in history, so does Episcopacy, so Presbyterianism, &c. I exclude none. I know that Christianity is mighty enough to accomplish its end in all. I cannot however speak of religious, any more than of political parties, without betraying the little respect I have for them as parties. There is no portion of human history more humbling than that of sects. When I meditate on the grand moral, spiritual purpose of Christianity, in which all its glory consists; when I consider how

Hosted by Google

plainly Christianity attaches importance to nothing but to the moral excellence, the disinterested, divine virtue, which was embodied in the teaching and life of its founder; and when from this position I look down on the sects which have figured, and now figure in the church; when I see them making such a stir about matters generally so unessential; when I see them seizing on a disputed and disputable doctrine, making it a watch-word, a test of God's favor, a bond of communion, a ground of self-complacency, a badge of peculiar holiness, a warrant for condemning its rejectors, however imbued with the spirit of Christ; when I see them overlooking the weightier matters of the law, and laying infinite stress here on a bishop and prayer-book, there on the quantity of water applied in baptism, and there on some dark solution of an incomprehensible article of faith; when I see the mock dignity of their exclusive claims to truth, to churchship, to the promises of God's word; when I hear the mimic thunderbolts of denunciation and excommunication, which they delight to hurl; when I consider how their deep theology, in proportion as it is examined, evaporates into words, how many opposite and extravagant notions are covered by the same broad shield of mystery and tradition, and how commonly the persuasion of infallibility is proportioned to the absurdity of the creed; when I consider these things, and other matters of like import, I am lost in amazement at the amount of arrogant folly, of self-complacent intolerance, of almost incredible blindness to the end and essence of Christianity, which the nistory of sects reveals. I have indeed profound respect for individuals in all communions of Christians. But on sects, and on the spirit of sects, I *must* be

Hosted by Google

allowed to look with grief, shame, pity, I had almost said, contempt. In passing these censures, I claim no superiority. I am sure there are thousands of all sects, who think and feel as I do in this particular, and who, far from claiming superior intelligence, are distinguished by following out the plain dictates, the natural impulses, and spontaneous judgments of conscience and common sense.

It is time for me to finish this letter, which indeed has grown under my hands beyond all reasonable bounds. But I must add a line or two in reply to your invitation to visit you. You say, that Kentucky will not exclude me for my opinions on slavery. I rejoice to hear it, not for my own sake, but for the sake of the country. I rejoice in a tolerant spirit, wherever manifested. What you say accords with what I have heard, of the frank, liberal character of Kentucky. All our accounts of the West make me desire to visit it. I desire to see nature under new aspects; but still more to see a new form of society. I hear of the defects of the West; but I learn that a man there feels himself to be a man, that he has a self-respect which is not always to be found in older communities, that he speaks his mind freely, that he acts more from generous impulses, and less from selfish calculations. These are good tidings. I rejoice that the intercourse between the East and West is increasing. Both will profit. The West may learn from us the love of order, the arts which adorn and cheer life, the institutions of education and religion, which lie at the foundation of our greatness, and may give us in return the energies and virtues which belong to and distinguish a fresher state of society. Such ex-

Hosted by Google

changes I regard as the most precious fruits of the Union, worth more than exchanges of products of industry, and they will do more to bind us together as one people.

You press me to come and preach in your part of the country. I should do it cheerfully if I could. It would rejoice me to bear a testimony, however feeble, to great truths in your new settlements. I confess, however, that I fear, that my education would unfit me for great usefulness among you. I fear that the habits, rules, and criticisms, under which I have grown up, and almost grown old, have not left me the freedom and courage which are needed in the style of address best suited to the Western people. I have fought against these chains. I have labored to be a free man, but in the state of the ministry and of society here, freedom is a hard acquisition. I hope the rising generation will gain it more easily and abundantly than their fathers.

I have only to add, my young brother, my best wishes for your usefulness. I do not ask for you enjoyment. I ask for you something better and greater, something which includes it, even a spirit to live and die for a cause, which is dearer than your own enjoyment. If I were called to give you one rule, which your situation demands above all others, it would be this. Live a life of faith and hope. Believe in God's great purposes towards the human race. Believe in the mighty power of truth and love. Believe in the omnipotence of Christianity. Believe that Christ lived and died to breathe into his church and into society a diviner spirit than now exists. Believe in the capacities and greatness of human nature. Believe that the celestial virtue, re-

Hosted by Google

vealed in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, is not a bright vision for barren admiration, but is to become a reality in your own and others' souls. Carry to your work a trustful spirit. Do not waste your breath in wailing over the times. Strive to make them better. Do not be disheartened by evils. Feel through your whole soul, that evil is not the mightiest power in the universe, that it is permitted only to call forth the energy of love, wisdom, persuasion, and prayer for its removal. Settle it in your mind, that a minister can never speak an effectual word without faith. Be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. Allow me to say, that I have a good hope of you. I learned some time ago, from one of your dear friends, that you comprehended the grandeur of your work as a Christian minister. I learned that the pulpit, from which a divinely moved teacher communicates everlasting truths, seemed to you more glorious than a throne. I learned, that you had come to understand what is the greatest power which God gives to man, the power of acting generously on the soul of his brother; of communicating to others a divine spirit, of awakening in others a heavenly life, which is to outlive the stars. I then felt that you would not labor in vain. You have indeed peculiar trials. You are dwelling far from your brethren, but there is a sense of God's presence more cheering than the dearest human society. There is a consciousness of working with God, more strengthening than all human coöperation. There is a sight, granted to the pure mind, of the cross of Christ, which makes privations and sufferings in the cause of his truth seem light, which makes us sometimes to rejoice in tribulation, like the primitive heroes of our faith. My young

Hosted by Google

brother, I wish you these blessings. What else ought I to wish for you?

This letter, you will perceive, is written in great haste. The opinions indeed have been deliberately formed; but they probably might have been expressed with greater caution. If it will serve, in your judgment, the cause of truth, freedom, and religion, you are at liberty to insert it in your work.

Your sincere friend,

WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER

ON

CREEDS.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

ON CREEDS.

My aversion to human creeds as bonds of Christian union, as conditions of Christian fellowship, as means of fastening chains on men's minds, constantly gains strength.

My first objection to them is, that they separate us from Jesus Christ. To whom am I to go for my knowledge of the Christian religion, but to the Great Teacher, to the Son of God, to him in whom the fulness of the divinity dwelt. This is my great privilege as a Christian, that I may sit at the feet not of a human but divine master, that I may repair to him in whom truth lived and spoke without a mixture of error; who was eminently the Wisdom of God and the light of the world. And shall man dare to interpose between me and my heavenly guide and Saviour, and prescribe to me the articles of my Christian faith? What is the state of mind in which I shall best learn the truth? It is that, in which I forsake all other teachers for Christ, in which my mind is brought nearest to him; it is that in which I lay myself open most entirely to the impressions of his mind. Let me go to Jesus with a human voice sounding in my ears, and telling me what I must

Hosted by Google

hear from the Great Teacher, and how can I listen to him in singleness of heart? All Protestant sects indeed tell the learner to listen to Jesus Christ; but most of them shout around him their own articles so vehemently and imperiously, that the voice of the heavenly master is well nigh drowned. He is told to listen to Christ, but told that he will be damned, if he receives any lessons but such as are taught in the creed. He is told that Christ's word is alone infallible, but that unless it is received as interpreted by fallible men, he will be excluded from the communion of Christians. This is what shocks me in the creed-maker. He interposes himself between me and my Saviour. He dares not trust me alone with Jesus. He dares not leave me to the word of God. This I cannot endure. The nearest possible communication with the mind of Christ, is my great privilege as a Christian. I must learn Christ's truth from Christ himself, as he speaks in the records of his life, and in the men whom he trained up and supernaturally prepared to be his witnesses to the world. On what ground, I ask, do the creed-makers demand assent to their articles as condition of church membership or salvation? What has conferred on them infallibility? "Show me your proofs," I say to them, "of Christ speaking in you. Work some miracle. Utter some prophecy. Show me something divine in you, which other men do not possess. Is it possible, that you are unaided men, like myself, having no more right to interpret the New Testament than myself, and that you yet exalt your interpretations as infallible standards of truth, and the necessary conditions of salvation. Stand out of my path. I wish to go to the master. Have you words of greater power than his?

Hosted by Google

Can you speak to the human conscience or heart in a mightier voice than he? What is it which emboldens you to tell me what I must learn of Christ or be lost?"

I cannot but look on human creeds with feelings approaching contempt. When I bring them into contrast with the New Testament, into what insignificance do they sink! What are they? Skeletons, freezing abstractions, metaphysical expressions of unintelligible dogmas; and these I am to regard as the expositions of the fresh, living, infinite truth which came from Jesus! I might with equal propriety be required to hear and receive the lispings of infancy as the expressions of wisdom. Creeds are to the Scriptures, what rush-lights are to the sun. The creed-maker defines Jesus in half a dozen lines, perhaps in metaphysical terms, and calls me to assent to this account of my Saviour. I learn less of Christ by this process, than I should learn of the sun, by being told that this glorious luminary is a circle about a foot in diameter. There is but one way of knowing Christ. We must place ourselves near him, see him, hear him, follow him from his cross to the heavens, sympathize with him and obey him, and thus catch clear and bright glimpses of his divine glory.

Christian Truth is Infinite. Who can think of shutting it up in a few lines of an abstract creed? You might as well compress the boundless atmosphere, the fire, the all-pervading light, the free winds of the universe, into separate parcels, and weigh and label them, as break up Christianity into a few propositions. Christianity is freer, more illimitable, than the light or the winds. It is too mighty to be bound down by man's puny hands. It is a spirit rather than a rigid doctrine,

Hosted by Google

the spirit of boundless love. The Infinite cannot be defined and measured out like a human manufacture. It cannot be reduced to a system. It cannot be comprehended in a set of precise ideas. It is to be felt rather than described. The spiritual impressions which a true Christian receives from the character and teachings of Christ, and in which the chief efficacy of the religion lies, can be poorly brought out in words. Words are but brief, rude hints of a Christian's mind. His thoughts and feelings overflow them. To those who feel as he does, he can make himself known; for such can understand the tones of the heart; but he can no more lay down his religion in a series of abstract propositions, than he can make known in a few vague terms the expressive features and inmost soul of a much-loved friend. It has been the fault of all sects, that they have been too anxious to define their religion. They have labored to circumscribe the infinite. Christianity, as it exists in the mind of the true disciple, is not made up of fragments, of separate ideas which he can express in detached propositions. It is a vast and ever-unfolding whole, pervaded by one spirit, each precept and doctrine deriving its vitality from its union with all. When I see this generous, heavenly doctrine compressed and cramped in human creeds, I feel as I should were I to see screws and chains applied to the countenance and limbs of a noble fellow-creature, deforming and destroying one of the most beautiful works of God.

From the Infinity of Christian truth, of which I have spoken, it follows that our views of it must always be very imperfect, and ought to be continually enlarged. The wisest theologians are children who have caught

Hosted by Google

but faint glimpses of the religion; who have taken but their first lessons; and whose business it is "to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." Need I say how hostile to this growth is a fixed creed, beyond which we must never wander? Such a religion as Christ's demands the highest possible activity and freedom of the soul. Every new gleam of light should be welcomed with joy. Every hint should be followed out with eagerness. Every whisper of the divine voice in the soul should be heard. The love of Christian truth should be so intense, as to make us willing to part with all other things for a better comprehension of it. Who does not see that human creeds, setting bounds to thought, and telling us where all inquiry must stop, tend to repress this holy zeal, to shut our eyes on new illumination, to hem us within the beaten paths of man's construction, to arrest that perpetual progress which is the life and glory of an immortal mind.

It is another and great objection to creeds, that, wherever they acquire authority, they interfere with that simplicity and godly sincerity, on which the efficacy of religious teaching very much depends. That a minister should speak with power, it is important that he should speak from his own soul, and not studiously conform himself to modes of speaking which others have adopted. It is important that he should give out the truth in the very form in which it presents itself to his mind, in the very words which offer themselves spontaneously as the clothing of his thoughts. To express our own minds frankly, directly, fearlessly, is the way to reach other minds. Now it is the effect of creeds to check this free utterance of thought. The minister must seek words which will not clash with the consecrated arti-

Hosted by Google

cles of his church. If new ideas spring up in his mind, not altogether consonant with what the creed-monger has established, he must cover them with misty language. If he happen to doubt the standard of his church, he must strain its phraseology, must force it beyond its obvious import, that he may give his assent to it without departures from truth. All these processes must have a blighting effect on the mind and heart. They impair self-respect. They cloud the intellectual eye. They accustom men to tamper with truth. In proportion as a man dilutes his thought and suppresses his conviction, to save his orthodoxy from suspicion; in proportion as he borrows his words from others, instead of speaking in his own tongue; in proportion as he distorts language from its common use, that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the manliness and integrity of his character. How deeply do I commiserate the minister, who, in the warmth and freshness of youth, is visited with glimpses of higher truth than is embodied in the creed, but who dares not be just to himself, and is made to echo what is not the simple, natural expression of his own mind! Better were it for us to beg our bread and clothe ourselves in rags, than to part with Christian simplicity and frankness. Better for a minister to preach in barns or the open air, where he may speak the truth from the fulness of his soul, than to lift up in cathedrals, amidst pomp and wealth, a voice which is not true to his inward thoughts If they who wear the chains of creeds, once knew the happiness of breathing the air of freedom, and of moving with an unincumbered spirit, no

Hosted by Google

wealth or power in the world's gift would bribe them to part with their spiritual liberty.

Another sad effect of creeds is, that they favor unbelief. It is not the object of a creed to express the simple truths of our religion, though in these its efficiency chiefly lies, but to embody and decree those mysteries about which Christians have been contending. I use the word "mysteries," not in the Scriptural but popular sense, as meaning doctrines which give a shock to the reason and seem to contradict some acknowledged truth. Such mysteries are the staples of creeds. The celestial virtues of Christ's character, these are not inserted into articles of faith. On the contrary, doctrines which from their darkness or unintelligibleness have provoked controversy, and which owe their importance very much to the circumstance of having been fought for or fought against for ages, these are thrown by the creed-makers into the foremost ranks of the religion, and made its especial representatives. Christianity as set forth in creeds is a propounder of dark sayings, of riddles, of knotty propositions, of apparent contradictions. Who, on reading these standards, would catch a glimpse of the simple, pure, benevolent, practical character of Christianity? And what is the result? Christianity becoming identified, by means of creeds, with so many dark doctrines, is looked on by many as a subject for theologians to quarrel about, but too thorny or perplexed for common minds, while it is spurned by many more as an insult on human reason, as a triumph of fanaticism over common sense.

It is a little remarkable that most creeds, whilst they abound in mysteries of human creation, have renounced the great mystery of religion. There is in religion a

Hosted by Google

great mystery. I refer to the doctrine of Free-will or moral liberty. How to reconcile this with God's foreknowledge and human dependence, is a question which has perplexed the greatest minds. It is probable that much of the obscurity arises from our applying to God the same kind of foreknowledge as men possess by their acquaintance with causes, and from our supposing the Supreme Being to bear the same relation to time as man. It is probable that juster views on these subjects will relieve the freedom of the will from some of its difficulties. Still the difficulties attending it are great. It is a mystery in the popular sense of the word. Now is it not strange that theologians who have made and swallowed so many other mysteries, have generally rejected this, and rejected it on the ground of objections less formidable than those which may be urged against their own inventions? A large part of the Protestant world have sacrificed man's freedom of will to God's foreknowledge and sovereignty, thus virtually subverting all religion, all duty, all responsibility. They have made man a machine, and destroyed the great distinction between him and the brute. There seems a fatality attending creeds. After burdening Christianity with mysteries of which it is as innocent as the unborn child, they have generally renounced the real mystery of religion, of human nature. They have subverted the foundation of moral government, by taking from man the only capacity which makes him responsible, and in this way have fixed on the commands and threatenings of God the character of a cruel despotism. What a lesson against man's attempting to impose his wisdom on his fellow-creatures as the truth of God!

Hosted by Google

ADDRESS ON TEMPERANCE.

DELIVERED BY REQUEST OF THE

COUNCIL OF THE MASSACHUSETTS TEMPERANCE SOCIETY,

AT THE ODEON, BOSTON, FEBRUARY 28, 1837,

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR THE SIMULTANEOUS MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF TEMPERANCE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

AN

ADDRESS ON TEMPERANCE.

I SEE before me the representatives of various societies for the promotion of temperance. It is a good and great cause, and I shall be grateful to God, if, by the service now allotted me, I can in any degree encourage them in their work, or throw new light on their path. The present occasion may well animate a Christian minister. What a noble testimony does this meeting bear to the spirit and influences of the Christian faith! Why is this multitude brought together? Not for selfish gratification, not for any worldly end, but for the purpose of arresting a great moral and social evil, of promoting the virtue, dignity, well-being of men. And whence comes this sympathy with the fallen, the guilty, the miserable? Have we derived it from the schools of ancient philosophy, or from the temples of Greece and Rome? No. We inherit it from Jesus Christ. We have caught it from his lips, his life, his cross. This meeting, were we to trace its origin, would carry us back to Bethlehem and Calvary. The impulse which Christ

Hosted by Google

gave to the human soul, having endured for ages, is now manifesting itself more and more, in new and increasing efforts of philanthropy for the redemption of the world from every form of evil. Within these walls the authority of Christ has sometimes been questioned, his character traduced. To the blasphemer of that holy name, what a reply is furnished by the crowd which these walls now contain! A religion, which thus brings and knits men together, for the help, comfort, salvation of their erring, lost fellow-creatures, bears on its front a broad, bright, unambiguous stamp of Divinity. Let us be grateful that we were born under its light, and more grateful still if we have been, in any measure, baptized into its disinterested and divine love.

I cannot hope, in the present stage of the temperance effort, to render any important aid to your cause by novelty of suggestion. Its friends have thoroughly explored the ground over which I am to travel. Still every man, who is accustomed to think for himself, is naturally attracted to particular views or points in the most familiar subject; and, by concentrating his thoughts on these, he sometimes succeeds in giving them a new prominence, in vindicating their just rank, and in securing to them an attention which they may not have received, but which is their due.

On the subject of intemperance, I have sometimes thought, perhaps without foundation, that its chief, essential evil was not brought out as thoroughly and frequently as its secondary evils, and that there was not a sufficient conviction of the depth of its causes and of the remedies which it demands. With these impressions, I invite your attention to the following topics: — the great essential evil of intemperance, — the extent of its

Hosted by Google

temptations, — its causes, — the means of its prevention or cure.

I. I begin with asking, what is the great, essential evil of intemperance? The reply is given, when I say, that intemperance is the *voluntary extinction of reason.* The great evil is inward or spiritual. The intemperate man divests himself, for a time, of his rational and moral nature, casts from himself self-consciousness and self-command, brings on phrensy, and, by repetition of this insanity, prostrates more and more his rational and moral powers. He sins immediately and directly against the rational nature, that divine principle, which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong action, which distinguishes man from the brute. This is the essence of the vice, what constitutes its peculiar guilt and woe, and what should particularly impress and awaken those who are laboring for its suppression. All the other evils of intemperance are light compared with this, and almost all flow from this; and it is right, it is to be desired, that all other evils should be joined with and follow this. It is to be desired, when a man lifts a suicidal arm against his highest life, when he quenches reason and conscience, that he and all others should receive solemn, startling warning of the greatness of his guilt; that terrible outward calamities should bear witness to the inward ruin which he is working; that the hand-writing of judgment and woe on his countenance, form, and whole condition, should declare what a fearful thing it is for a man, God's rational offspring, to renounce his reason and become a brute. It is common for those who argue against intemperance, to describe the bloated countenance of the drunkard, now flushed and now deadly pale. They describe his trembling,

Hosted by Google

palsied limbs. They describe his waning prosperity, his poverty, his despair. They describe his desolate, cheerless home, his cold hearth, his scanty board, his heart-broken wife, the squalidness of his children ; and we groan in spirit over the sad recital. But it is right, that all this should be. It is right, that he, who, forewarned, puts out the lights of understanding and conscience within him, who abandons his rank among God's rational creatures, and takes his place among brutes, should stand a monument of wrath among his fellows, should be a teacher wherever he is seen, a teacher, in every look and motion, of the awful guilt of destroying reason. Were we so constituted, that reason could be extinguished, and the countenance retain its freshness, the form its grace, the body its vigor, the outward condition its prosperity, an l no striking change be seen in one's home, so far from being gainers, we should lose some testimonies of God's parental care. His care and goodness, as well as his justice, are manifested in the fearful mark he has set on the drunkard, in the blight which falls on all the drunkard's joys. These outward evils, dreadful as they seem, are but faint types of the ruin within. We should see in them God's respect to his own image in the soul, his parental warnings against the crime of quenching the intellectual and moral life.

We are too apt to fix our thoughts on the consequences or punishments of crime, and to overlook the crime itself. This is not turning punishment to its highest use. Punishment is an outward sign of inward evil. It is meant to reveal something more terrible than itself. The greatness of punishment is a mode of embodying, making visible, the magnitude of the crime to which it

Hosted by Google

is attached. The miseries of intemperance, its loathsomeness, ghastliness, and pains, are not seen aright, if they do not represent to us the more fearful desolation wrought by this sin in the soul.

Among the evils of intemperance, much importance is given to the poverty of which it is the cause. But this evil, great as it is, is yet light in comparison with the essential evil of intemperance, which I am so anxious to place distinctly before you. What matters it that a man be poor, if he carry into his poverty the spirit, energy, reason, and virtues of a Man? What matters it that a man must, for a few years, live on bread and water? How many of the richest are reduced by disease to a worse condition than this? Honest, virtuous, noble-minded poverty is a comparatively light evil. The ancient philosopher chose it as the condition of virtue. It has been the lot of many a Christian. The poverty of the intemperate man owes its great misery to its cause. He who makes himself a beggar, by having made himself a brute, is miserable indeed. He who has no solace, who has only agonizing recollections and harrowing remorse, as he looks on his cold hearth, his scanty table, his ragged children, has indeed to bear a crushing weight of woe. That he suffers, is a light thing. That he has brought on himself this suffering by the voluntary extinction of his reason, this is the terrible thought, the intolerable curse.

We are told, that we must keep this or that man from drunkenness, to save him from "coming on the town," from being a burden to the city. The motive is not to be overlooked; but I cannot keep my thoughts fixed for a moment on the few hundred or thousand dollars, which the intemperate cost. When I go to the poor-

Hosted by Google

house, and see the degradation, the spiritual weakness, the abjectness, the half-idiot imbecility written on the drunkard's countenance, I see a ruin which makes the cost of his support a grain of dust in the scale. I am not sorry that society is taxed for the drunkard. I would it were taxed more. I would the burden of sustaining him were so heavy, that we should be compelled to wake up, and ask how he may be saved from ruin. It is intended, wisely intended by God, that sin shall spread its miseries beyond itself, that no human being shall suffer alone, that the man who falls shall draw others with him, if not into his guilt, at least into a portion of his woe. If one member of the social body suffer, others must suffer too; and this is well. This is one of the dependencies, by which we become interested in one another's moral safety, and are summoned to labor for the rescue of the fallen.

Intemperance is to be pitied and abhorred for its own sake, much more than for its outward consequences. These consequences owe their chief bitterness to their criminal source. We speak of the miseries which the drunkard carries into his family. But take away his own brutality, and how lightened would be these miseries. We talk of his wife and children in rags. Let the rags continue; but suppose them to be the effects of an innocent cause. Suppose the drunkard to have been a virtuous husband, and an affectionate father, and that sickness, not vice, has brought his family thus low. Suppose his wife and children bound to him by a strong love, which a life of labor for their support, and of unwearied kindness has awakened; suppose them to know that his toils for their welfare had broken down his frame; suppose him able to say, "We are poor in this

Hosted by Google

world's goods, but rich in affection and religious trust. I am going from you; but I leave you to the Father of the fatherless and to the widow's God." Suppose this, and how changed these rags! How changed the cold, naked room! The heart's warmth can do much to withstand the winter's cold; and there is hope, there is honor in this virtuous indigence. What breaks the heart of the drunkard's wife? It is not that he is poor, but that he is a drunkard. Instead of that bloated face, now distorted with passion, now robbed of every gleam of intelligence, if the wife could look on an affectionate countenance, which had for years been the interpreter of a well principled mind and faithful heart, what an overwhelming load would be lifted from her. It is a husband, whose touch is polluting, whose infirmities are the witnesses of his guilt, who has blighted all her hopes, who has proved false to the vow which made her his; it is such a husband who makes home a hell, not one whom toil and disease and providence have cast on the care of wife and children.

We look too much at the consequences of vice, too little at the vice itself. It is vice, which is the chief weight of what we call its consequence, vice which is the bitterness in the cup of human woe.

II. I proceed now to offer some remarks on the extent of temptations to this vice. And on this point, I shall not avail myself of the statistics of intemperance. I shall not attempt to number its victims. I wish to awaken universal vigilance, by showing that the temptations to this excess are spread through all classes of society. We are apt to speak as if the laborious, uneducated, unimproved, were alone in danger, and as

Hosted by Google

if we ourselves had no interest in this cause, except as others are concerned. But it is not so; multitudes in all classes are in danger. In truth, when we recall the sad histories of not a few in every circle, who once stood among the firmest and then yielded to temptation, we are taught, that none of us should dismiss fear, that we too may be walking on the edge of the abyss. The young are exposed to intemperance, for youth wants forethought, loves excitement, is apt to place happiness in gayety, is prone to convivial pleasure, and too often finds or makes this the path to hell; nor are the old secure, for age unnerves the mind as well as the body, and silently steals away the power of self-control. The idle are in scarcely less peril than the over-worked laborer; for uneasy cravings spring up in the vacant mind, and the excitement of intoxicating draughts is greedily sought as an escape from the intolerable weariness of having nothing to do. Men of a coarse, unrefined character fall easily into intemperance, because they see little in its brutality to disgust them. It is a sadder thought, that men of genius and sensibility are hardly less exposed. Strong action of the mind is even more exhausting than the toil of the hands. It uses up, if I may so say, the finer spirits, and leaves either a sinking of the system which craves for tonics, or a restlessness which seeks relief in deceitful sedatives. Besides, it is natural for minds of great energy, to hunger for strong excitement; and this, when not found in innocent occupation and amusement, is too often sought in criminal indulgence. These remarks apply peculiarly to men whose genius is poetical, imaginative, allied with, and quickened by, peculiar sensibility. Such men, living in worlds of their own creation,

Hosted by Google

kindling themselves with ideal beauty and joy, and too often losing themselves in reveries, in which imagination ministers to appetite, and the sensual triumphs over the spiritual nature, are peculiarly in danger of losing the balance of the mind, of losing calm thought, clear judgment, and moral strength of will, become children of impulse, learn to despise simple and common pleasures, and are hurried to ruin by a feverish thirst of high-wrought, delirious gratification. In such men, these mental causes of excess are often aggravated by peculiar irritableness of the nervous system. Hence the records of literature are so sad. Hence the brightest lights of the intellectual world have so often undergone disastrous eclipse; and the inspired voice of genius, so thrilling, so exalting, has died away in the brutal or idiot cries of intemperance. I have now been speaking of the highest order of intellectual men; but it may be said of men of education in general, that they must not feel themselves beyond peril. It is said, that as large a proportion of intemperate men can be found among those, who have gone through our colleges, as among an equal number of men in the same sphere of life, who have not enjoyed the same culture. It must not, however, be inferred, that the cultivation of the intellect affords no moral aids. The truth is, that its good tendencies are thwarted. Educated men fall victims to temptation as often as other men, not because education is inoperative, but because our public seminaries give a partial training, being directed almost wholly to the developement of the intellect, and very little to moral culture, and still less to the invigoration of the physical system. Another cause of the evil is probably this, that young men, liberally educated, enter on professions

Hosted by Google

which give at first little or no occupation, which expose them, perhaps for years, to the temptations of leisure, the most perilous in an age of inexperience and passion. Accordingly, the ranks of intemperance are recruited from that class which forms the chief hope of society. And I would I could stop here. But there is another prey on which intemperance seizes, still more to be deplored, and that is Woman. I know no sight on earth more sad, than woman's countenance, which once knew no suffusion but the glow of exquisite feeling, or the blush of hallowed modesty, crimsoned, deformed by intemperance. Even woman is not safe. The delicacy of her physical organization exposes her to inequalities of feeling, which tempt to the seductive relief given by cordials. Man with his iron nerves little knows what the sensitive frame of woman suffers, how many desponding imaginations throng on her in her solitudes, how often she is exhausted by unremitting cares, and how much the power of self-control is impaired by repeated derangements of her frail system. The truth should be told. In all our families, no matter what their condition, there are endangered individuals, and fear and watchfulness in regard to intemperance belong to all.

Do not say, that I exaggerate your exposure to intemperance. Let no man say, when he thinks of the drunkard, broken in health and spoiled of intellect, "I can never so fall." He thought as little of falling in his earlier years. The promise of his youth was as bright as yours; and even after he began his downward course, he was as unsuspicious as the firmest around him, and would have repelled as indignantly the admonition to beware of intemperance. The danger of this vice lies

Hosted by Google

in its almost imperceptible approach. Few who perish by it know its first accesses. Youth does not see or suspect drunkenness in the sparkling beverage, which quickens all its susceptibilities of joy. The invalid does not see it in the cordial, which his physician prescribes, and which gives new tone to his debilitated organs. The man of thought and genius detects no palsying poison in the draught, which seems a spring of inspiration to intellect and imagination. The lover of social pleasure little dreams, that the glass, which animates conversation, will ever be drunk in solitude, and will sink him too low for the intercourse in which he now delights. Intemperance comes with noiseless step, and binds its first cords with a touch too light to be felt. This truth of mournful experience should be treasured up by us all, and should influence the habits and arrangements of domestic and social life in every class of the community.

Such is the extent of the temptations of this vice. It is true, however, that whilst its ravages may be traced through all conditions, they are chiefly to be found in the poorer and laboring portions of society. Here its crimes and woes swell to an amount which startles and appalls us. Here the evil is to be chiefly withstood. I shall, therefore, in my following remarks, confine myself very much to the causes and remedies of intemperance in this class of the community.

III. Among the causes of intemperance in the class of which I have spoken, not a few are to be found in the present state of society, which every man does something to confirm, and which brings to most of us many privileges. On these I shall now insist, because

Hosted by Google

they show our obligation to do what we can to remove the evil. It is just, that they who receive good, should aid those who receive harm from our present social organization. Undoubtedly, the primary cause of intemperance is in the intemperate themselves, in their moral weakness and irresolution, in the voluntary surrender of themselves to temptation. Still, society, by increasing temptation and diminishing men's power to resist, becomes responsible for all wide-spread vices, and is bound to put forth all its energy for their suppression. This leads me to consider some of the causes of intemperance, which have their foundation in our social state.

One cause of the commonness of intemperance in the present state of things, is the heavy burden of care and toil which is laid on a large multitude of men. Multitudes, to earn subsistence for themselves and their families, are often compelled to undergo a degree of labor exhausting to the spirits and injurious to health. Of consequence, relief is sought in stimulants. We do not find that civilization lightens men's toils; as yet it has increased them; and in this effect, I see the sign of a deep defect in what we call the progress of society. It cannot be the design of the Creator, that the whole of life should be spent in drudgery for the supply of animal wants. That civilization is very imperfect, in which the mass of men can redeem no time from bodily labor, for intellectual, moral, and social culture. It is melancholy to witness the degradation of multitudes to the condition of beasts of burden. Exhausting toils unfit the mind to withstand temptation. The man, spent with labor, and cut off by his condition from higher pleasures, is impelled to seek a deceitful solace

Hosted by Google

in sensual excess. How the condition of society shall be so changed as to prevent excessive pressure on any class, is undoubtedly a hard question. One thing seems plain, that there is no tendency in our present institutions and habits to bring relief. On the contrary, rich and poor seem to be more and more oppressed with incessant toil, exhausting forethought, anxious struggles, feverish competitions. Some look to legislation to lighten the burden of the laboring class. But equal laws and civil liberty have no power to remove the shocking contrast of condition which all civilized communities present. Inward, spiritual improvement, I believe, is the only sure remedy for social evils. What we need is a new diffusion of Christian, fraternal love, to stir up the powerful and prosperous to succour liberally and encourage the unfortunate or weak, and a new diffusion of intellectual and moral force, to make the multitude efficient for their own support, to form them to self-control, and to breathe a spirit of independence, which will scorn to ask or receive unnecessary relief.

Another cause, intimately connected with the last, is the intellectual depression and the ignorance to which many are subjected. They who toil from morning to night, without seasons of thought and mental improvement, are of course exceedingly narrowed in their faculties, views, and sources of gratification. The present moment, and the body, engross their thoughts. The pleasures of intellect, of imagination, of taste, of reading, of cultivated society, are almost entirely denied them. What pleasures but those of the senses remain? Unused to reflection and forethought, how dim must be their perceptions of religion and duty, and how little fitted are they to cope with temptation! Undoubtedly

Hosted by Google

in this country, this cause of intemperance is less operative than in others. There is less brutal ignorance here than elsewhere; but, on the other hand, the facilities of excess are incomparably greater, so that for the uneducated, the temptation to vice may be stronger in this than in less enlightened lands. Our outward prosperity, unaccompanied with proportionate moral and mental improvement, becomes a mighty impulse to intemperance, and this impulse the prosperous are bound to withstand.

I proceed to another cause of intemperance among the poor and laboring classes, and that is the general sensuality and earthliness of the community. There is indeed much virtue, much spirituality, in the prosperous classes, but it is generally unseen. There is a vastly greater amount in these classes of worldiness, of devotion to the senses, and this stands out in bold relief. The majority live unduly for the body. Where there is little intemperance in the common acceptation of that term, there is yet a great amount of excess. Thousands, who are never drunk, place their chief happiness in pleasures of the table. How much of the intellect of this community is palsied, how much of the expression of the countenance blotted out, how much of the spirit buried, through unwise indulgence! What is the great lesson, which the more prosperous classes teach to the poorer? Not self-denial, not spirituality, not the great Christian truth, that human happiness lies in the triumphs of the mind over the body, in inward force and life. The poorer are taught by the richer, that the greatest good is ease, indulgence. The voice which descends from the prosperous, contradicts the lessons of Christ and of sound philosophy. It is the sensuality,

Hosted by Google

the earthliness of those who give the tone to public sentiment, which is chargeable with a vast amount of the intemperance of the poor. How is the poor man to resist intemperance? Only by a moral force, an energy of will, a principle of self-denial in his soul. And where is this taught him? Does a higher morality come to him from those whose condition makes them his superiors? The great inquiry which he hears among the better educated is, What shall we eat and drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? Unceasing struggles for outward, earthly, sensual good, constitute the chief activity which he sees around him. To suppose that the poorer classes should receive lessons of luxury and self-indulgence from the more prosperous, and should yet resist the most urgent temptations to excess, is to expect from them a moral force, in which we feel ourselves to be sadly wanting. In their hard conflicts, how little of life-giving truth, of elevating thought, of heavenly aspiration, do they receive from those above them in worldly condition!

Another cause of intemperance, is the want of self-respect which the present state of society induces among the poor and laborious. Just as far as wealth is the object of worship, the measure of men's importance, the badge of distinction, so far there will be a tendency to self-contempt and self-abandonment among those whose lot gives them no chance of its acquisition. Such naturally feel as if the great good of life were denied them. They see themselves neglected. Their condition cuts them off from communication with the improved. They think they have little stake in the general weal. They do not feel as if they had a character to lose. Nothing reminds them of the greatness of their nature. Nothing

Hosted by Google

teaches them, that in their obscure lot they may secure the highest good on earth. Catching from the general tone of society the ruinous notion, that wealth is honor as well as happiness, they see in their narrow lot nothing to inspire self-respect. In this delusion, they are not more degraded than the prosperous; they but echo the voice of society; but to them the delusion brings a deeper, immediate ruin. By sinking them in their own eyes, it robs them of a powerful protection against low vices. It prepares them for coarse manners, for gross pleasures, for descent to brutal degradation. Of all classes of society, the poor should be treated with peculiar deference, as the means of counteracting their chief peril; I mean, the loss of self-respect. But to all their other evil is added peculiar neglect. Can we then wonder that they fall?

I might name other causes in our social constitution favoring intemperance; but I must pass them, and will suggest one characteristic of our times, which increases all the tendencies to this vice. Our times are distinguished by what is called a love of excitement; in other words, by a love of strong stimulants. To be stimulated, excited, is the universal want. The calmness, sobriety, plodding industry of our fathers, have been succeeded by a feverish restlessness. The books that are read are not the great, standard, immortal works of genius, which require calm thought, and inspire deep feeling; but ephemeral works, which are run through with a railroad rapidity, and which give a pleasure not unlike that produced by exhilarating draughts. Business is become a race, and is hurried on by the excitement of great risks, and the hope of great profits. Even religion partakes the general restlessness. In some

Hosted by Google

places, extravagant measures, which storm the nervous system, and drive the more sensitive to the borders of insanity, are resorted to for its promotion. Everywhere people go to church to be excited rather than improved. This thirst for stimulants cannot be shut up in certain spheres. It spreads through and characterizes the community. It pervades those classes, who, unhappily, can afford themselves but one strong stimulus, intoxicating liquor; and among these, the spirit of the age breaks out in intemperance.

IV. I have now set before you some of the causes of intemperance in our present social state; and this I have done that you may feel that society, in all its ranks, especially in the highest, is bound in justice to resist the evil; and not only justice, but benevolence pleads with us to spare no efforts for its prevention or cure. The thought that in the bosom of our society, are multitudes standing on the brink of perdition, multitudes who are strongly tempted to debase and destroy their rational nature, to sink into brutal excess, to seal their ruin in this world and in the world to come, ought to weigh on us as a burden, ought to inspire deeper concern than the visitation of pestilence, ought to rouse every man who has escaped this degradation, to do what he may to rescue the fallen, and still more, to save the falling.

The question now comes, how shall we arrest, how suppress, this great evil? Such is our last inquiry, and to this I answer, there are two modes of action. To rescue men, we must act on them inwardly or outwardly. We must either give them strength within to withstand the temptations to intemperance, or we must re-

Hosted by Google

move these temptations without. We must increase the power of resistance, or diminish the pressure which is to be resisted. Both modes of influence are useful, but the first incalculably the most important. No man is safe against this foe, but he who is armed with moral force, with strength in his own soul, with the might of principle, and a virtuous will. The great means, then, of repressing intemperance in those portions of society which are most exposed to it, is to communicate to them, or awaken in them, moral strength, the power of self-denial, a nobler and more vigorous action of conscience and religious principle. In other words, to save the laboring and poor from intemperance, we must set in action amongst them, the means of intellectual, moral, and religious improvement. We must strive to elevate them as rational and moral beings, to unfold their highest nature. It is idle to think, that, whilst these classes remain the same in other respects, they can be cured of intemperance. Intemperance does not stand alone in their condition and character. It is a part or sign of general degradation. It can only be effectually removed by exalting their whole character and condition. To heal a diseased limb or organ, you must relieve and strengthen the whole body. So it is with the mind. We cannot, if we would, remove those vices from the poor, which are annoying to ourselves, and leave them, in other respects, as corrupt as before. Nothing but a general improvement of their nature, can fortify them against the crimes which make them scourges alike to themselves and to their race.

And how may moral strength, force of principle, be communicated to the less prosperous classes of society? I answer first, the surest means is, to increase it among

Hosted by Google

the more favored. All classes of a community have connexions, sympathies. Let selfishness and sensuality reign among the prosperous and educated, and the poor and uneducated will reflect these vices in grosser forms. That man is the best friend to temperance among high and low, whose character and life express clearly and strongly moral energy, self-denial, superiority to the body, superiority to wealth, elevation of sentiment and principle. The greatest benefactor to society is not he who serves it by single acts, but whose general character is the manifestation of a higher life and spirit than pervades the mass. Such men are the salt of the earth. The might of individual virtue surpasses all other powers. The multiplication of individuals of true force and dignity of mind, would be the surest of all omens of the suppression of intemperance in every condition of society.

Another means is, the cultivation of a more fraternal intercourse than now exists between the more and less improved portions of the community. Our present social barriers and distinctions, in so far as they restrict sympathy, and substitute the spirit of caste, the bigotry of rank, for the spirit of humanity, for reverence of our common nature, ought to be reprobated as gross violations of the Christian law. Those classes of society which have light, strength, and virtue, are bound to communicate these to such as want them. The weak, ignorant, falling and fallen, ought not to be cut off from their more favored brethren, ought not to be left to act continually and exclusively on one another, and thus to propagate their crimes and woes without end. The good should form a holy conspiracy against evil, should assail it by separate and joint exertion, should approach

Hosted by Google

it, study it, weep and pray over it, and throw all their souls into efforts for its removal. My friends, you whom God has prospered, whom he has enlightened, in whose hearts he has awakened a reverence for himself, what are you doing for the fallen, the falling, the miserable of your race? When an improved Christian thinks of the mass of unpitied, unfriended guilt in this city, must he not be shocked at the hardness of all our hearts? Are we not all of one blood, one nature, one heavenly descent; and are outward distinctions, which to-morrow are to be buried for ever in the tomb, to divide us from one another, to cut off the communications of brotherly sympathy and aid? In a Christian community, not one human being should be left to fall, without counsel, remonstrance, sympathy, encouragement, from others more enlightened and virtuous than himself. Say not this cannot be done. I know it cannot be done without great changes in our habits, views, feelings; but these changes must be made. A new bond must unite the scattered portions of men. A new sense of responsibility must stir up the enlightened, the prosperous, the virtuous. Christianity demands this. The progress of society demands it. I see blessed omens of this, and they are among the brightest features of our times.

Again, to elevate and strengthen the more exposed classes of society, it is indispensable that a Higher Education should be afforded them. We boast of the means of education afforded to the poorest here. It may be said with truth, in regard to both rich and poor, that these means are very deficient. As to moral education, hardly any provisions are made for it in our public schools. To educate is something more than to teach those elements of knowledge which are needed

Hosted by Google

to get a subsistence. It is to exercise and call out the higher faculties and affections of a human being. Education is not the authoritative, compulsory, mechanical training of passive pupils, but the influence of gifted and quickening minds on the spirits of the young. Such education is, as yet, sparingly enjoyed, and cannot be too fervently desired. Of what use, let me ask, is the wealth of this community, but to train up a better generation than ourselves? Of what use, I ask, is freedom, except to call forth the best powers of all classes and of every individual? What, but human improvement, is the great end of society? Why ought we to sustain so anxiously republican institutions, if they do not tend to form a nobler race of men, and to spread nobleness through all conditions of social life? It is a melancholy and prevalent error among us, that persons in the laboring classes are denied by their conditions any considerable intellectual improvement. They must live, it is thought, to work, not to fulfil the great end of a human being, which is to unfold his divinest powers and affections. But it is not so. The poorest child might, and ought to have liberal means of self-improvement; and were there a true reverence among us for human nature and for Christianity, he would find them. In a letter, recently received from a most intelligent traveller in Germany, I am informed, that in certain parts of that country, there is found, in the most depressed classes, a degree of intellectual culture, not generally supposed to consist with their lot; that a sense of the beautiful in nature and art produces much happiness in a portion of society, which among us is thought to be disqualified for this innocent and elevated pleasure; that the teaching in Sunday schools is in some places more various than

Hosted by Google

here, and that a collection of books, and a degree of scientific knowledge may be met in cottages far inferior to the dwellings of our husbandmen. "In short," my friend adds, "I have seen abundant proof, that intellectual culture, as found here, spreads its light and comfort through a class, that hardly exists at all with us, or, where it does exist, is generally supposed to labor under a degree of physical wretchedness inconsistent with such culture." Information of this kind should breathe new hope into philanthropic labors for the intellectual and moral life of every class in society. How much may be done in this city to spread knowledge, vigor of thought, the sense of beauty, the pleasures of the imagination and the fine arts, and, above all, the influences of religion, through our whole community! Were the prosperous and educated to learn, that, after providing for their families, they cannot better employ their possessions and influence, than in forwarding the improvement and elevation of society, how soon would this city be regenerated! How many generous spirits might be enlisted here by a wise bounty in the work of training their fellow-creatures! Wealth cannot be better used, than in rescuing men of vigorous and disinterested minds from worldly toils and cares, in giving them time and opportunity for generous self-culture, and in enabling them to devote their whole strength and being to a like culture of their race. The surest mark of a true civilization is, that the arts which minister to sensuality decrease, and spiritual employments are multiplied, or that more and more of the highest ability in the state is withdrawn from labors for the animal life, and consecrated to the work of calling forth the intellect, the imagination, the conscience, the pure affections, the

Hosted by Google

moral energy of the community at large, and especially of the young. What is now wasted among us in private show and luxury, if conscientiously and wisely devoted to the furnishing of means of generous culture to all classes among us, would render this city the wonder and joy of the whole earth. What is thus wasted might supply not only the means of education in the sciences, but in the refined arts. Music might here be spread as freely as in Germany, and be made a lightener of toil, a cheerer of society, a relief of loneliness, a solace in the poorest dwellings. Still more, what we now waste would furnish this city, in a course of years, with the chief attractions of Paris, with another Louvre, and with a Garden of Plants, where the gifted of all classes might have opportunity to cultivate the love of nature and art. Happily, the cause of a higher education begins to find friends here. Thanks to that enlightened and noble-minded son of Boston, whose ashes now slumber on a foreign shore, but who has left to his birthplace a testimony of filial love, in his munificent bequest for the diffusion of liberal instruction through this metropolis. Honored be the name of Lowell, the intellectual benefactor of his native city! A community, directing its energies chiefly to a higher education of its rising members, to a generous developement of human nature, would achieve what as yet has not entered human thought; and it is for this end, that we ought to labor. Our show, and our luxury, how contemptible in comparison with the improvement of our families, neighbourhood, and race!

Allow me here to express an earnest desire, that our legislators, provoked to jealousy by the spirit of improvement in other states, and moved by zeal for the

Hosted by Google

ancient honor of this Commonwealth, may adopt some strong measures for the advancement of education among us. We need an institution for the formation of better teachers; and, until this step is taken, we can make no important progress. The most crying want in this Commonwealth is the want of accomplished teachers. We boast of our schools; but our schools do comparatively little, for want of educated instructors. Without good teaching, a school is but a name. An institution for training men to train the young, would be a fountain of living waters, sending forth streams to refresh present and future ages. As yet, our legislators have denied to the poor and laboring classes this principal means of their elevation. We trust they will not always prove blind to the highest interest of the state.

We want better teachers and more teachers for all classes of society, for rich and poor, for children and adults. We want that the resources of the community should be directed to the procuring of better instructors, as its highest concern. One of the surest signs of the regeneration of society will be, the elevation of the art of teaching to the highest rank in the community. When a people shall learn, that its greatest benefactors and most important members are men devoted to the liberal instruction of all its classes, to the work of raising to life its buried intellect, it will have opened to itself the path of true glory. This truth is making its way. Socrates is now regarded as the greatest man in an age of great men. The name of King has grown dim before that of Apostle. To teach, whether by word or action, is the highest function on earth. It is commonly supposed, that instructors are needed only in the earlier years of life. But ought the education

Hosted by Google

of a human being ever to cease? And may it not always be forwarded by good instruction? Some of us, indeed, can dispense with all teachers save the silent book. But to the great majority, the voice of living teachers is an indispensable means of cultivation. The discovery and supply of this want would give a new aspect to a community. Nothing is more needed, than that men of superior gifts and of benevolent spirit, should devote themselves to the instruction of the less enlightened classes in the great end of life, in the dignity of their nature, in their rights and duties, in the history, laws, and institutions of their country, in the philosophy of their employments, in the laws, harmonies, and productions of outward nature, and especially, in the art of bringing up children in health of body, and in vigor and purity of mind. We need a new profession or vocation, the object of which shall be to wake up the intellect in those spheres where it is now buried in habitual slumber. We honor, and cannot too much honor the philanthropist, who endows permanent institutions for the relief of human suffering; but not less good, I apprehend, would be accomplished by inquiring for and seizing on men of superior ability and disinterestedness, and by sending them forth to act immediately on society. A philanthropist, who should liberally afford to one such man the means of devoting himself to the cultivation of the poorer classes of society, would confer invaluable good. One gifted man, with his heart in the work, who should live among the uneducated, to spread useful knowledge and quickening truth, by conversation and books, by frank and friendly intercourse, by encouraging meetings for improvement, by forming the more teachable into classes, and giving

Hosted by Google

to these the animation of his presence and guidance, by bringing parents to an acquaintance with the principles of physical, intellectual, and moral education, by instructing families in the means and conditions of health, by using, in a word, all the methods which an active, generous mind would discover or invent for awakening intelligence and moral life ; one gifted man, so devoted, might impart a new tone and spirit to a considerable circle ; and what would be the result, were such men to be multiplied and combined, so that a community might be pervaded by their influence ? We owe much to the writings of men of genius, piety, science, and exalted virtue. But most of these remain shut up in narrow spheres. We want a class of liberal instructors, whose vocation it shall be to place the views of the most enlightened minds within the reach of a more and more extensive portion of their fellow-creatures. The wealth of a community should flow out like water for the preparation and employment of such teachers, for enlisting powerful and generous minds in the work of giving impulse to their race. Jesus Christ in instituting the ministry, laid the foundation of the intellectual and moral agency which I now urge. On this foundation we ought to build more and more, until a life-giving influence shall penetrate all classes of society. What a painful thought is it, that such an immense amount of intellectual and moral power, of godlike energy, is this very moment lying dead among us ! Can we do nothing for its resurrection ? Until this be done, we may lop off the branches of intemperance ; but its root will live ; and happy shall we be if its poisonous shade do not again darken our land. — Let it not be said that the laborious can find no time for such instruction as is now

Hosted by Google

proposed. More or less leisure, if sought, can be found in almost every life. Nor let it be said that men, able and disposed to carry on this work, must not be looked for in such a world as ours. Christianity, which has wrought so many miracles of beneficence, which has sent forth so many apostles and martyrs, so many Howards and Clarksons, can raise up laborers for this harvest also. Nothing is needed but a new pouring out of the spirit of Christian love, nothing but a new comprehension of the brotherhood of the human race, to call forth efforts which seem impossibilities in a self-seeking and self-indulging age.

I will add but one more means of giving moral power and general improvement to those portions of the community, in which intemperance finds its chief victims. We must not only promote education in general, but especially send among them Christian instruction, Christian teachers, who shall be wholly devoted to their spiritual welfare. And here, I cannot but express my joy at the efforts made for establishing a ministry among the poor in this and other cities. Though not sustained as it should be, it yet subsists in sufficient vigor to show what it can accomplish. I regard this institution, as among the happiest omens of our times. It shows, that the spirit of him who came to seek and to save that which was lost, is not dead among us. Christianity is the mighty power before which intemperance is to fall. Christianity, faithfully preached, assails and withstands this vice, by appealing, as nothing else can, to men's hopes and fears, by speaking to the conscience in the name of the Almighty Judge, by speaking to the heart in the name of the Merciful Father, by proffering strength to human weakness and pardon to human guilt.

Hosted by Google

by revealing to men an immortal nature within, and an eternal state before them, by spreading over this life a brightness borrowed from the life to come, by awakening generous affections, and binding man by new ties to God and his race. But Christianity, to fulfil this part of its mission, to reach those who are most exposed to intemperance, must not only speak in the churches, where these are seldom found, but must enter their dwellings in the persons of its ministers, must commune with them in the language of friendship, must take their children under its guardianship and control. The ministry for the poor, sustained by men worthy of the function, will prove one of the most powerful barriers ever raised against intemperance.

The means of suppressing this vice, on which I have hitherto insisted, have for their object to strengthen and elevate the whole character of the classes most exposed to intemperance. I would now suggest a few means fitted to accomplish the same end, by diminishing or removing the temptations to this vice.

The first means, which I shall suggest of placing a people beyond the temptations to intemperance, is to furnish them with the means of innocent pleasure. This topic, I apprehend, has not been sufficiently insisted on. I feel its importance and propose to enlarge upon it, though some of the topics which I may introduce may seem to some hardly consistent with the gravity of this occasion. We ought not, however, to respect the claims of that gravity which prevents a faithful exposition of what may serve and improve our fellow-creatures.

I have said, a people should be guarded against temptation to unlawful pleasures, by furnishing the means of

Hosted by Google

innocent ones. By innocent pleasures I mean such as excite moderately; such as produce a cheerful frame of mind, not boisterous mirth; such as refresh, instead of exhausting, the system; such as occur frequently, rather than continue long; such as send us back to our daily duties, invigorated in body and in spirit; such as we can partake in the presence and society of respectable friends; such as consist with, and are favorable to, a grateful piety; such as are chastened by self-respect, and are accompanied with the consciousness that life has a higher end than to be amused. In every community there *must* be pleasures, relaxations, and means of agreeable excitement; and if innocent ones are not furnished, resort will be had to criminal. Man was made to enjoy, as well as to labor; and the state of society should be adapted to this principle of human nature. France, especially before the revolution, has been represented as a singularly temperate country; a fact to be explained, at least in part, by the constitutional cheerfulness of that people, and by the prevalence of simple and innocent gratifications, especially among the peasantry. Men drink to excess very often to shake off depression, or to satisfy the restless thirst for agreeable excitement, and these motives are excluded in a cheerful community. A gloomy state of society, in which there are few innocent recreations, may be expected to abound in drunkenness, if opportunities are afforded. The savage drinks to excess, because his hours of sobriety are dull and unvaried, because, in losing the consciousness of his condition and his existence, he loses little which he wishes to retain. The laboring classes are most exposed to intemperance, because they have at present few other pleasurable excitements. A

Hosted by Google

man, who, after toil, has resources of blameless recreation is less tempted than other men to seek self-oblivion. He has too many of the pleasures of a man, to take up with those of a brute. Thus, the encouragement of simple, innocent enjoyments is an important means of temperance.

These remarks show the importance of encouraging the efforts, which have commenced among us, for spreading the accomplishment of Music through our whole community. It is now proposed that this shall be made a regular branch in our schools; and every friend of the people must wish success to the experiment. I am not now called to speak of all the good influences of music, particularly of the strength which it may and ought to give to the religious sentiment, and to all pure and generous emotions. Regarded merely as a refined pleasure, it has a favorable bearing on public morals. Let taste and skill in this beautiful art be spread among us, and every family will have a new resource. Home will gain a new attraction. Social intercourse will be more cheerful, and an innocent public amusement will be furnished to the community. Public amusements, bringing multitudes together to kindle with one emotion, to share the same innocent joy, have a humanizing influence; and among these bonds of society, perhaps no one produces so much unmixed good as music. What a fulness of enjoyment has our Creator placed within our reach, by surrounding us with an atmosphere which may be shaped into sweet sounds? And yet this goodness is almost lost upon us, through want of culture of the organ by which this provision is to be enjoyed.

Dancing is an amusement, which has been discour-

Hosted by Google

aged in our country by many of the best people, and not without reason. Dancing is associated in their minds with balls ; and this is one of the worst forms of social pleasure. The time consumed in preparation for a ball, the waste of thought upon it, the extravagance of dress, the late hours, the exhaustion of strength, the exposure of health, and the languor of the succeeding day,—these and other evils, connected with this amusement, are strong reasons for banishing it from the community. But dancing ought not therefore to be proscribed. On the contrary, balls should be discouraged for this among other reasons, that dancing, instead of being a rare pleasure, requiring elaborate preparation, may become an every-day amusement, and may mix with our common intercourse. This exercise is among the most healthful. The body as well as the mind feels its gladdening influence. No amusement seems more to have a foundation in our nature. The animation of youth overflows spontaneously in harmonious movements. The true idea of dancing entitles it to favor. Its end is, to realize perfect grace in motion ; and who does not know, that a sense of the graceful is one of the higher faculties of our nature ? It is to be desired, that dancing should become too common among us to be made the object of special preparation as in the ball ; that members of the same family, when confined by unfavorable weather, should recur to it for exercise and exhilaration ; that branches of the same family should enliven in this way their occasional meetings ; that it should fill up an hour in all the assemblages for relaxation, in which the young form a part. It is to be desired, that this accomplishment should be extended to the laboring classes of society, not only as an inno-

Hosted by Google

cent pleasure, but as a means of improving the manners. Why shall not gracefulness be spread through the whole community? From the French nation, we learn, that a degree of grace and refinement of manners may pervade all classes. The philanthropist and Christian must desire to break down the partition-walls between human beings in different conditions; and one means of doing this is, to remove the conscious awkwardness, which confinement to laborious occupations is apt to induce. An accomplishment, giving free and graceful movement, though a far weaker bond than intellectual or moral culture, still does something to bring those who partake it, near each other.

I approach another subject, on which a greater variety of opinion exists than on the last, and that is the Theatre. In its present state, the theatre deserves no encouragement. It is an accumulation of immoral influences. It has nourished intemperance and all vice In saying this, I do not say that the amusement is radically, essential evil. I can conceive of a theatre, which would be the noblest of all amusements, and would take a high rank among the means of refining the taste and elevating the character of a people. The deep woes, the mighty and terrible passions, and the sublime emotions of genuine tragedy, are fitted to thrill us with human sympathies, with profound interest in our nature, with a consciousness of what man can do and dare and suffer, with an awed feeling of the fearful mysteries of life. The soul of the spectator is stirred from its depths; and the lethargy, in which so many live, is roused, at least for a time, to some intenseness of thought and sensibility. The drama answers a high purpose, when it places us in the presence of the most

Hosted by Google

solemn and striking events of human history, and lays bare to us the human heart in its most powerful, appalling, glorious workings. But how little does the theatre accomplish its end? How often is it disgraced by monstrous distortions of human nature, and still more disgraced by profaneness, coarseness, indelicacy, low wit, such as no woman, worthy of the name, can hear without a blush, and no man can take pleasure in without self-degradation. Is it possible, that a Christian and a refined people can resort to theatres, where exhibitions of dancing are given fit only for brothels, and where the most licentious class in the community throng unconcealed to tempt and destroy? That the theatre should be suffered to exist in its present degradation is a reproach to the community. Were it to fall, a better drama might spring up in its place. In the mean time, is there not an amusement, having an affinity with the drama, which might be usefully introduced among us? I mean, Recitation. A work of genius, recited by a man of fine taste, enthusiasm, and powers of elocution, is a very pure and high gratification. Were this art cultivated and encouraged, great numbers, now insensible to the most beautiful compositions, might be waked up to their excellence and power. It is not easy to conceive of a more effectual way of spreading a refined taste through a community. The drama, undoubtedly, appeals more strongly to the passions than recitation; but the latter brings out the meaning of the author more. Shakspeare, worthily recited, would be better understood than on the stage. Then, in recitation, we escape the weariness of listening to poor performers, who, after all, fill up most of the time at the theatre. Recitation, sufficiently varied, so as to

Hosted by Google

include pieces of chaste wit, as well as of pathos, beauty, and sublimity, is adapted to our present intellectual progress, as much as the drama falls below it. Should this exhibition be introduced among us successfully, the result would be, that the power of recitation would be extensively called forth, and this would be added to our social and domestic pleasures.

I have spoken in this discourse of intellectual culture, as a defence against intemperance, by giving force and elevation to the mind. It also does great good as a source of amusement; and on this ground should be spread through the community. A cultivated mind may be said to have infinite stores of innocent gratification. Every thing may be made interesting to it, by becoming a subject of thought or inquiry. Books, regarded merely as a gratification, are worth more than all the luxuries on earth. A taste for literature secures cheerful occupation for the unemployed and languid hours of life; and how many persons, in these hours, for want of innocent resources, are now impelled to coarse and brutal pleasures. How many young men can be found in this city, who, unaccustomed to find a companion in a book, and strangers to intellectual activity, are almost driven, in the long, dull evenings of winter, to haunts of intemperance, and depraving society. It is one of the good signs of the times, that lectures on literature and science are taking their place among our public amusements, and attract even more than theatres. This is one of the first fruits of our present intellectual culture. What a harvest may we hope for from its wider diffusion!

In these remarks, I have insisted on the importance of increasing innocent gratifications in a community.

Hosted by Google

Let us become a more cheerful, and we shall become a more temperate people. To increase our susceptibility of innocent pleasure, and to remove many of the sufferings which tempt to evil habits, it would be well if physical, as well as moral education were to receive greater attention. There is a puny, half-healthy, half-diseased state of the body, too common among us, which, by producing melancholy and restlessness, and by weakening the energy of the will, is a strong incitement to the use of hurtful stimulants. Many a case of intemperance has had its origin in bodily infirmity. Physical vigor is not only valuable for its own sake, but it favors temperance, by opening the mind to cheerful impressions, and by removing those indescribable feelings of sinking, disquiet, depression, which experience alone can enable you to understand. I have pleaded for mental culture; but nothing is gained by sacrificing the body to the mind. Let not intellectual education be sought at the expense of health. Let not our children in their early years be instructed, as is too common, in close, unventilated rooms, where they breathe for hours a tainted air. Our whole nature must be cared for. We must become a more cheerful, animated people; and for this end we must propose, in our systems of education, the invigoration of both body and mind.

I am aware, that the views now expressed may not find unmixed favor with all the friends of temperance. To some, perhaps to many, religion and amusement seem mutually hostile, and he, who pleads for the one, may fall under suspicion of unfaithfulness to the other. But to fight against our nature, is not to serve the cause of piety or sound morals. God, who gave us our nature, who has constituted body and mind incapable of

Hosted by Google

continued effort, who has implanted a strong desire for recreation after labor, who has made us for smiles much more than for tears, who has made laughter the most contagious of all sounds, whose Son hallowed a marriage feast by his presence and sympathy, who has sent the child fresh from his creating hand to develope its nature by active sports, and who has endowed both young and old with a keen susceptibility of enjoyment from wit and humor, — He, who has thus formed us, cannot have intended us for a dull, monotonous life, and cannot frown on pleasures which solace our fatigue and refresh our spirits for coming toils. It is not only possible to reconcile amusement with duty, but to make it the means of more animated exertion, more faithful attachments, more grateful piety. True religion is at once authoritative and benign. It calls us to suffer, to die, rather than to swerve a hair's breadth from what God enjoins as right and good ; but it teaches us, that it is right and good, in ordinary circumstances, to unite relaxation with toil, to accept God's gifts with cheerfulness, and to lighten the heart, in the intervals of exertion, by social pleasures. A religion, giving dark views of God, and infusing superstitious fear of innocent enjoyment, instead of aiding sober habits, will, by making men abject and sad, impair their moral force, and prepare them for intemperance as a refuge from depression or despair.

Two other means remain to be mentioned, for removing the temptations to intemperance, and these are, the discouragement of the use and the discouragement of the sale of ardent spirits in the community.

First, we should discourage the use of ardent spirits in the community. It is very plain, too plain to be in-

Hosted by Google

sisted on, that to remove what intoxicates, is to remove intoxication. In proportion as ardent spirits are banished from our houses, our tables, our hospitalities, in proportion as those who have influence and authority in the community, abstain themselves, and lead their dependents to abstain from their use, in that proportion, the occasions of excess must be diminished, the temptations to it must disappear. It is objected, I know, that, if we begin to give up what others will abuse, we must give up every thing, because there is nothing which men will not abuse. I grant, that it is not easy to define the limits at which concessions are to stop. Were we called on to relinquish an important comfort of life, because others were perverting it into an instrument of crime and woe, we should be bound to pause and deliberate before we act. But no such plea can be set up in the case before us. Ardent spirits are not an important comfort, and in no degree a comfort. They give no strength; they contribute nothing to health; they can be abandoned without the slightest evil. They aid men neither to bear the burden nor to discharge the duties of life; and in saying this, I stop short of the truth. It is not enough to say, that they never do good; they generally injure. In their moderate use, they act, in general, unfavorably on body and mind. According to respectable physicians, they are not digested like food, but circulate unchanged like a poison through the system. Like other poisons, they may occasionally benefit as medicines; but when made a beverage by the healthy, they never do good; they generally are pernicious. They are no more intended by Providence for drink, than opium is designed for food. Consider next, that ardent spirits are not only without benefit, when

Hosted by Google

moderately used, but that they instigate to immoderate use; that they beget a craving, a feverish thirst, which multitudes want power to resist; that in some classes of society, great numbers become their victims, are bereft by them of reason, are destroyed in body and soul, destroyed here and hereafter; that families are thus made desolate, parents hurried to a premature grave, and children trained up to crime and shame. Consider all this, and then judge, as in the sight of God, whether you are not bound to use your whole influence in banishing the use of spirits, as one of the most pernicious habits, from the community. If you were to see, as a consequence of this beverage, a loathsome and mortal disease breaking out occasionally in all ranks, and sweeping away crowds in the most depressed portion of society, would you not lift up your voices against it; and is not an evil more terrible than pestilence, the actual, frequent result of the use of spirituous liquors? That use you are bound to discourage; and how? By abstaining wholly yourselves, by excluding ardent spirits wholly from your tables, by giving your whole weight and authority to abstinence. This practical, solemn testimony, borne by the good and respectable, cannot but spread a healthful public sentiment through the whole community. This is especially our duty at the present moment, when a great combined effort of religious and philanthropic men is directed against this evil, and when an impression has been made on the community, surpassing the most sanguine hopes. At the present moment, he who uses ardent spirits, or introduces them into his hospitalities, virtually arrays himself against the cause of temperance and humanity. He not merely gives an example to his children and his domestics,

Hosted by Google

which he may one day bitterly rue; he withstands the good in their struggles for the virtue and happiness of mankind. He forsakes the standard of social reform, and throws himself into the ranks of its foes.

After these remarks, it will follow, that we should discourage the sale of ardent spirits. What ought not to be used as a beverage, ought not to be sold as such. What the good of the community requires us to expel, no man has a moral right to supply. That intemperance is dreadfully multiplied by the number of licensed shops for the retailing of spirits, we all know. That these should be shut, every good man desires. Law, however, cannot shut them except in a limited extent, or only in a few favored parts of the country. Law is here the will of the people, and the legislature can do little, unless sustained by the public voice. To form, then, an enlightened and vigorous public sentiment, which will demand the suppression of these licensed nurseries of intemperance, is a duty to which every good man is bound, and a service in which each may take a share. And not only should the vending of spirits in these impure haunts be discouraged; the vending of them by respectable men should be regarded as a great public evil. The retailer takes shelter under the wholesale dealer, from whom he purchases the pernicious draught; and has he not a right so to do? Can we expect that he should shrink from spreading on a small scale, what others spread largely without rebuke? Can we expect his conscience to be sensitive, when he treads in the steps of men of reputation? Of the character of those who vend spirits, I do not judge. They grew up in the belief of the innocence of the traffic, and this conviction they may sincerely retain. But error,

Hosted by Google

though sincere, is error still. Right and wrong do not depend on human judgment or human will. Truth and duty may be hidden for ages ; but they remain unshaken as God's throne ; and when, in the course of his providence, they are made known to one or a few, they must be proclaimed, whoever may be opposed. Truth, truth, is the hope of the world. Let it be spoken in kindness, but with power.

Some of the means of withstanding intemperance have now been stated. Other topics, were there time, I should be glad to offer to your attention. But I must pause. —I will only add, that every lover of his race has strong encouragement to exert himself for the prevention of intemperance. The striking success of societies instituted for this end should give animation and hope. But even had these associations and these efforts failed, I should not despair. From the very terribleness of the evil, we may derive incitement and hope in our labors for its suppression. It cannot be, that God has created moral beings to become brutes, or placed them in circumstances irresistibly impelling them to this utter renunciation of the proper good of their nature. There are, there must be, means of prevention or cure for this deadliest moral disease. The unhappiness is, that too many of us, who call ourselves the friends of temperance, have not virtue and love enough to use powerfully the weapons of the spirit, for the succour of the tempted and fallen. We are ourselves too sensual, to rescue others from sensuality. The difference between us and the intemperate man is too small, to fit us for his deliverance. But that there are means of withstanding intemperance ; that it is the design and tendency of Christianity to raise up men fit and worthy

Hosted by Google

to wield these means ; and that there are always some, who are prepared to lead the way in this holy work, I cannot doubt. I see, indeed, a terrible energy in human appetites and passions. But I do not faint. Truth is mightier than error ; virtue, than vice ; God, than the evil man. In contending earnestly against intemperance, we have the help and friendship of Him who is Almighty. We have allies in all that is pure, rational, divine in the human soul, in the progressive intelligence of the age, in whatever elevates public sentiment, in religion, in legislation, in philosophy, in the yearnings of the parent, in the prayers of the Christian, in the teachings of God's house, in the influences of God's Spirit. With these allies, friends, helpers, let good men not despair, but be strong in the faith, that, in due time, thev shall reap, if they faint not.

Hosted by Google

NOTES.

I have spoken of the causes of intemperance which are found in our state of society. I should wrong, however, the community to which I belong, were I to leave the impression, that our social condition offers nothing but incitements to this vice. It presents obstacles as well as affords facilities to it. And this ought to be understood, as an encouragement to the efforts, which, according to the preceding remarks, we are bound to make for its suppression. The growth of intelligence among us, is a powerful antagonist to intemperance. In proportion as we awaken and invigorate men's faculties, we help them to rise above a brutal life; we take them out of the power of the present moment, enlarge their foresight, give them the means of success in life, open to them sources of innocent pleasure, and prepare them to bear part in respectable society. It is true, that intelligence or knowledge is not virtue. It may not overcome selfishness; but it makes our self-love wiser and more reflecting, gives us a better understanding of our own interests, teaches prudence if not generosity, and, in this way, is a powerful guardian against ruinous excess. We have another defence against intemperance, in our freedom. Freedom nourishes self-respect, and, by removing all obstructions to exertion, by opening to men the means of bettering their lot, favors an animated, hopeful industry, thus rescuing a people from depression, despondence, and languor, which are among the chief temptations to brutalizing excess. It is indeed said, that freedom generates all

Hosted by Google

forms of licentiousness, and, consequently, intemperance But it is, I believe, a well established fact, that this vice has decreased since our struggle for independence. The habits and manners of the last generation were more perilous to temperance than our own. Social intercourse was more deformed by excess. Men in mature life visited taverns, and the young could not meet, without the danger of drowning reason in wine. It is a false notion, that we are wholly indebted for our present reform in this particular to temperance societies. These have done great good, and deserve great praise ; but the influence which is now carrying us on preceded them. They are its effects, not causes. An important change of habits had commenced before their institution, and this seems to me an important view, and one of the chief encouragements to joint and individual exertion for the suppression of this vice. Did I believe, that our present social condition offered nothing but materials to intemperance, that it excluded all contrary influences, and that our whole hope for stemming this evil rested on the temperance societies, I should be tempted to despond. Such societies can avail little, except when they act in concurrence with causes in the condition of society. Such causes exist, and one great use of temperance societies is to bring them into more energetic and extensive action.

I have not insisted on one of the means of temperance on which great stress has been laid, that is, the influence of Public Opinion. To bring this to bear against intemperance, has been regarded by not a few as the chief method of subduing the evil. Too much, I think, is hoped from it. One obvious remark is, that the classes most exposed to intemperance are removed very much from the power

Hosted by Google

of public opinion. But, passing over this, I think we generally look to this influence for more than it can accomplish. We lay upon it a greater weight than it can bear. Public opinion may even work against the cause which it is meant to support, when made a substitute for individual exertion. A man, temperate because public opinion exacts it, has not the virtue of temperance, nor a stable ground of temperate habits. The remark is especially applicable to these times. Opinion, in former days, was more permanent than at present. There were few or no causes in operation to unsettle general convictions. Society was cast into fixed forms. Ages passed away, and slight changes were seen in manners and in modes of thinking. But the present is a revolutionary age. Society, breaking from its old moorings, is tossed on a restless and ever-stormy ocean. Opinion no longer affords that steady guidance, which in former times supplied the place of private judgment and individual principle. There is no truth which sophistry does not now assail, no falsehood which may not become a party bond. The great work to which religion and benevolence are now called, is not to sweep away multitudes by storm, not to lay on men the temporary, brittle chains of opinion but to fix deep, rational conviction in individuals, to awaken the reason to eternal truth and the conscience to immutable duty. We are apt to labor to secure to virtue the power of fashion. We must secure to it the power of conviction. It is the essence of fashion to change. Nothing is sure but truth. No other foundation can sustain a permanent reform. The temperance, which rests on other men's opinions and practice, is not a man's own virtue, but a reflection of what exists around him. It lies on the surface. It has not penetrated the soul.

That opinion may exert a great and useful influence, is not denied ; but it must be enlightened opinion, appealing

Hosted by Google

to the reason and the conscience of the individual ; not to passion, interest, or fear, nor proscribing all who differ. We want public opinion to bear on temperance, but to act rationally, generously, nor passionately, tyrannically, and with the spirit of persecution. Men cannot be driven into temperance. Let the temperate become a party, and breathe the violence of party, and they will raise up a party as violent as their own. The friends of truth must not call passion to their aid, for the erroneous and vicious have a greater stock of passion than they, and can wield this weapon to more effect. It is not by numbers or a louder cry, that good men are to triumph over the bad. Their goodness, their consciousness of truth, and universal love, must be manifested in clear, strong, benevolent appeals to the reason and heart. They must speak in the tone of the friend of their race. This will do infinitely more than the clamor of hosts.

It seems to me an important remark, that public opinion cannot do for virtue what it does for vice. It is the essence of virtue to look above opinion. Vice is consistent with, and very often strengthened by, entire subserviency to it. It is a motive to be cautiously used, because the mind, which passively yields to it, will find it a debilitating, rather than an invigorating influence. The moral independence which can withstand public sentiment, is men's only safety. Whenever public sentiment shall be enlightened enough to promote this superiority to itself, it will be a noble spring. In proportion as it wars against this self-subsistence, it subverts the only foundation of substantial, enduring reform.

It is sometimes very hazardous to attempt to extirpate a common vice by making it disgraceful, and passing on it a sentence of outlawry. If, indeed, the vice be confined to the poor and obscure, the brand of infamy may easily be fixed on it ; but when it spreads higher, and is

Hosted by Google

taken under the protection of fashion, it can not only parry the weapon of disgrace in the hand of its adversaries, but turn this against them. Fashion is singularly expert in the use of ridicule. What it wants in reason, it can supply in sneers and laughter. Sometimes it puts on indifference as a coat of mail. It has especially the art of attaching the idea of vulgarity to a good cause; and what virtue has courage to encounter this most dreaded form of opinion?

Hosted by Google

SELF-CULTURE.

AN ADDRESS

INTRODUCTORY TO THE FRANKLIN LECTURES

DELIVERED AT BOSTON, SEPT., 1838.

Hosted by Google

THIS Address was intended to make two lectures; but the author was led to abridge it and deliver it as one, partly by the apprehension, that some passages were too abstract for a popular address, partly to secure the advantages of presenting the whole subject at once and in close connexion, and for other reasons which need not be named. Most of the passages which were omitted, are now published. The author respectfully submits the discourse to those for whom it was particularly intended, and to the public, in the hope, that it will at least bring a great subject before the minds of some, who may not as yet have given to it the attention it deserves.

Hosted by Google

ADDRESS ON SELF-CULTURE.

My respected Friends:

By the invitation of the committee of arrangements for the Franklin Lectures, I now appear before you to offer some remarks introductory to this course. My principal inducement for doing so is my deep interest in those of my fellow-citizens, for whom these lectures are principally designed. I understood that they were to be attended chiefly by those who are occupied by manual labor; and, hearing this, I did not feel myself at liberty to decline the service to which I had been invited. I wished by compliance to express my sympathy with this large portion of my race. I wished to express my sense of obligation to those, from whose industry and skill I derive almost all the comforts of life. I wished still more to express my joy in the efforts they are making for their own improvement, and my firm faith in their success. These motives will give a particular character and bearing to some of my remarks. I shall speak occasionally as among those who live by the labor of their hands. But I shall not speak as one separated

Hosted by Google

from them. I belong rightfully to the great fraternity of working men. Happily in this community we all are bred and born to work; and this honorable mark, set on us all, should bind together the various portions of the community.

I have expressed my strong interest in the mass of the people; and this is founded, not on their usefulness to the community, so much as on what they are in themselves. Their condition is indeed obscure; but their importance is not on this account a whit the less. The multitude of men cannot, from the nature of the case, be distinguished; for the very idea of distinction is, that a man stands out from the multitude. They make little noise and draw little notice in their narrow spheres of action; but still they have their full proportion of personal worth and even of greatness. Indeed every man, in every condition, is great. It is only our own diseased sight which makes him little. A man is great as a man, be he where or what he may. The grandeur of his nature turns to insignificance all outward distinctions. His powers of intellect, of conscience, of love, of knowing God, of perceiving the beautiful, of acting on his own mind, on outward nature, and on his fellow-creatures, these are glorious prerogatives. Through the vulgar error of undervaluing what is common, we are apt indeed to pass these by as of little worth. But as in the outward creation, so in the soul, the common is the most precious. Science and art may invent splendid modes of illuminating the apartments of the opulent; but these are all poor and worthless, compared with the common light which the sun sends into all our windows, which he pours freely, impartially over hill and valley, which kindles daily the eastern and western sky; and so

Hosted by Google

the common lights of reason, and conscience, and love, are of more worth and dignity than the rare endowments which give celebrity to a few. Let us not disparage that nature which is common to all men; for no thought can measure its grandeur. It is the image of God, the image even of his infinity, for no limits can be set to its unfolding. He who possesses the divine powers of the soul is a great being, be his place what it may. You may clothe him with rags, may immure him in a dungeon, may chain him to slavish tasks. But he is still great. You may shut him out of your houses; but God opens to him heavenly mansions. He makes no show indeed in the streets of a splendid city; but a clear thought, a pure affection, a resolute act of a virtuous will, have a dignity of quite another kind and far higher than accumulations of brick and granite and plaster and stucco, however cunningly put together, or though stretching far beyond our sight. Nor is this all. If we pass over this grandeur of our common nature, and turn our thoughts to that comparative greatness, which draws chief attention, and which consists in the decided superiority of the individual to the general standard of power and character, we shall find this as free and frequent a growth among the obscure and unnoticed as in more conspicuous walks of life. The truly great are to be found everywhere, nor is it easy to say, in what condition they spring up most plentifully Real greatness has nothing to do with a man's sphere. It does not lie in the magnitude of his outward agency, in the extent of the effects which he produces. The greatest men may do comparatively little abroad. Perhaps the greatest in our city at this moment are buried in obscurity. Grandeur of character lies wholly in

Hosted by Google

force of soul, that is, in the force of thought, moral principle, and love, and this may be found in the humblest condition of life. A man brought up to an obscure trade, and hemmed in by the wants of a growing family, may, in his narrow sphere, perceive more clearly, discriminate more keenly, weigh evidence more wisely, seize on the right means more decisively, and have more presence of mind in difficulty, than another who has accumulated vast stores of knowledge by laborious study; and he has more of intellectual greatness. Many a man, who has gone but a few miles from home, understands human nature better, detects motives and weighs character more sagaciously, than another, who has travelled over the known world, and made a name by his reports of different countries. It is force of thought which measures intellectual, and so it is force of principle which measures moral greatness, that highest of human endowments, that brightest manifestation of the Divinity. The greatest man is he who chooses the Right with invincible resolution, who resists the sorest temptations from within and without, who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully, who is calmest in storms and most fearless under menace and frowns, whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, is most unfaltering; and is this a greatness, which is apt to make a show, or which is most likely to abound in conspicuous station? The solemn conflicts of reason with passion; the victories of moral and religious principle over urgent and almost irresistible solicitations to self-indulgence; the hardest sacrifices of duty, those of deep-seated affection and of the heart's fondest hopes; the consolations, hopes, joys, and peace, of disappointed, persecuted, scorned, deserted virtue; these are of course unseen;

Hosted by Google

so that the true greatness of human life is almost wholly out of sight. Perhaps in our presence, the most heroic deed on earth is done in some silent spirit, the loftiest purpose cherished, the most generous sacrifice made, and we do not suspect it. I believe this greatness to be most common among the multitude, whose names are never heard. Among common people will be found more of hardship borne manfully, more of unvarnished truth, more of religious trust, more of that generosity which gives what the giver needs himself, and more of a wise estimate of life and death, than among the more prosperous.—And even in regard to influence over other beings, which is thought the peculiar prerogative of distinguished station, I believe, that the difference between the conspicuous and the obscure does not amount to much. Influence is to be measured, not by the extent of surface it covers, but by its *kind*. A man may spread his mind, his feelings, and opinions, through a great extent; but if his mind be a low one, he manifests no greatness. A wretched artist may fill a city with daubs, and by a false, showy style achieve a reputation; but the man of genius, who leaves behind him one grand picture, in which immortal beauty is embodied, and which is silently to spread a true taste in his art, exerts an incomparably higher influence. Now the noblest influence on earth is that exerted on character; and he who puts forth this, does a great work, no matter how narrow or obscure his sphere. The father and mother of an unnoticed family, who, in their seclusion, awaken the mind of one child to the idea and love of perfect goodness, who awaken in him a strength of will to repel all temptation, and who send him out prepared to profit by the conflicts of life, surpass in influence a

Hosted by Google

Napolean breaking the world to his sway. And not only is their work higher in kind; who knows, but that they are doing a greater work even as to extent or surface than the conqueror? Who knows, but that the being, whom they inspire with holy and disinterested principles, may communicate himself to others; and that, by a spreading agency, of which they were the silent origin, improvements may spread through a nation, through the world? In these remarks you will see why I feel and express a deep interest in the obscure, in the mass of men. The distinctions of society vanish before the light of these truths. I attach myself to the multitude, not because they are voters and have political power; but because they are men, and have within their reach the most glorious prizes of humanity.

In this country the mass of the people are distinguished by possessing means of improvement, of self-culture, possessed nowhere else. To incite them to the use of these, is to render them the best service they can receive. Accordingly I have chosen for the subject of this lecture, Self-culture, or the care which every man owes to himself, to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature. I consider this topic as particularly appropriate to the introduction of a course of lectures, in consequence of a common disposition to regard these and other like means of instruction, as able of themselves to carry forward the hearer. Lectures have their use. They stir up many, who, but for such outward appeals, might have slumbered to the end of life. But let it be remembered, that little is to be gained simply by coming to this place once a-week, and giving up the mind for an hour to be wrought upon by a teacher. Unless we are roused to act upon ourselves, unless we engage in the

Hosted by Google

work of self-improvement, unless we purpose strenuously to form and elevate our own minds, unless what we hear is made a part of ourselves by conscientious reflection, very little permanent good is received.

Self-culture, I am aware, is a topic too extensive for a single discourse, and I shall be able to present but a few views which seem to me most important. My aim will be, to give first the Idea of self-culture, next its Means, and then to consider some objections to the leading views which I am now to lay before you.

Before entering on the discussion, let me offer one remark. Self-culture is something possible. It is not a dream. It has foundations in our nature. Without this conviction, the speaker will but declaim, and the hearer listen without profit. There are two powers of the human soul which make self-culture possible, the self-searching and the self-forming power. We have first the faculty of turning the mind on itself; of recalling its past, and watching its present operations; of learning its various capacities and susceptibilities, what it can do and bear, what it can enjoy and suffer; and of thus learning in general what our nature is, and what it was made for. It is worthy of observation, that we are able to discern not only what we already are, but what we may become, to see in ourselves germs and promises of a growth to which no bounds can be set, to dart beyond what we have actually gained to the idea of Perfection as the end of our being. It is by this self-comprehending power that we are distinguished from the brutes, which give no signs of looking into themselves. Without this there would be no self-culture, for we should not know the work to be done; and one reason why self-culture is so little proposed is, that so

Hosted by Google

few penetrate into their own nature. To most men, their own spirits are shadowy, unreal, compared with what is outward. When they happen to cast a glance inward, they see there only a dark, vague chaos. They distinguish perhaps some violent passion, which has driven them to injurious excess; but their highest powers hardly attract a thought; and thus multitudes live and die as truly strangers to themselves, as to countries of which they have heard the name, but which human foot has never trodden.

But self-culture is possible, not only because we can enter into and search ourselves. We have a still nobler power, that of acting on, determining and forming ourselves. This is a fearful as well as glorious endowment, for it is the ground of human responsibility. We have the power not only of tracing our powers, but of guiding and impelling them; not only of watching our passions, but of controlling them; not only of seeing our faculties grow, but of applying to them means and influences to aid their growth. We can stay or change the current of thought. We can concentrate the intellect on objects which we wish to comprehend. We can fix our eyes on perfection, and make almost everything speed us towards it. This is indeed a noble prerogative of our nature. Possessing this, it matters little what or where we are now, for we can conquer a better lot, and even be happier for starting from the lowest point. Of all the discoveries which men need to make, the most important at the present moment, is that of the self-forming power treasured up in themselves. They little suspect its extent, as little as the savage apprehends the energy which the mind is created to exert on the material world. It transcends in impor-

Hosted by Google

tance all our power over outward nature. There is more of divinity in it, than in the force which impels the outward universe; and yet how little we comprehend it! How it slumbers in most men unsuspected, unused! This makes self-culture possible, and binds it on us as a solemn duty.

I. I am first to unfold the idea of self-culture; and this, in its most general form, may easily be seized. To cultivate any thing, be it a plant, an animal, a mind, is to make grow. Growth, expansion is the end. Nothing admits culture, but that which has a principle of life, capable of being expanded. He, therefore, who does what he can to unfold all his powers and capacities, especially his nobler ones, so as to become a well proportioned, vigorous, excellent, happy being, practises self-culture.

This culture, of course, has various branches corresponding to the different capacities of human nature; but, though various, they are intimately united and make progress together. The soul, which our philosophy divides into various capacities, is still one essence, one life; and it exerts at the same moment, and blends in the same act, its various energies of thought, feeling, and volition. Accordingly, in a wise self-culture, all the principles of our nature grow at once by joint, harmonious action, just as all parts of the plant are unfolded together. When therefore you hear of different branches of self-improvement, you will not think of them as distinct processes going on independently of each other, and requiring each its own separate means. Still a distinct consideration of these is needed to a full com-

Hosted by Google

prehension of the subject, and these I shall proceed to unfold.

First, self-culture is Moral, a branch of singular importance. When a man looks into himself, he discovers two distinct orders or kinds of principles, which it behoves him especially to comprehend. He discovers desires, appetites, passions, which terminate in himself, which crave and seek his own interest, gratification, distinction; and he discovers another principle, an antagonist to these, which is Impartial, Disinterested, Universal, enjoining on him a regard to the rights and happiness of other beings, and laying on him obligations which *must* be discharged, cost what they may, or however they may clash with his particular pleasure or gain. No man, however narrowed to his own interest, however hardened by selfishness, can deny, that there springs up within him a great idea in opposition to interest, the idea of Duty, that an inward voice calls him more or less distinctly, to revere and exercise Impartial Justice, and Universal Good-will. This disinterested principle in human nature we call sometimes reason, sometimes conscience, sometimes the moral sense or faculty. But, be its name what it may, it is a real principle in each of us, and it is the supreme power within us, to be cultivated above all others, for on its culture the right developement of all others depends. The passions indeed may be stronger than the conscience, may lift up a louder voice; but their clamor differs wholly from the tone of command in which the conscience speaks. They are not clothed with its authority, its binding power. In their very triumphs they are rebuked by the moral principle, and often cower before its still, deep, menacing voice. No part

Hosted by Google

of self-knowledge is more important than to discern clearly these two great principles, the self-seeking and the disinterested; and the most important part of self-culture is to depress the former, and to exalt the latter, or to enthrone the sense of duty within us. There are no limits to the growth of this moral force in man, if he will cherish it faithfully. There have been men, whom no power in the universe could turn from the Right, by whom death in its most dreadful forms has been less dreaded, than transgression of the inward law of universal justice and love.

In the next place, self-culture is Religious. When we look into ourselves, we discover powers, which link us with this outward, visible, finite, ever-changing world. We have sight and other senses to discern, and limbs and various faculties to secure and appropriate the material creation. And we have, too, a power, which cannot stop at what we see and handle, at what exists within the bounds of space and time, which seeks for the Infinite, Uncreated Cause, which cannot rest till it ascend to the Eternal, All-comprehending Mind. This we call the religious principle, and its grandeur cannot be exaggerated by human language; for it marks out a being destined for higher communion than with the visible universe. To develope this, is eminently to educate ourselves. The true idea of God, unfolded clearly and livingly within us, and moving us to adore and obey him, and to aspire after likeness to him, is the noblest growth in human, and, I may add, in celestial natures. The religious principle, and the moral, are intimately connected, and grow together. The former is indeed the perfection and highest manifestation of the latter. They are both disinterested. It is

Hosted by Google

the essence of true religion to recognise and adore in God the attributes of Impartial Justice and Universal Love, and to hear him commanding us in the conscience to become what we adore.

Again. Self-culture is Intellectual. We cannot look into ourselves without discovering the intellectual principle, the power which thinks, reasons, and judges, the power of seeking and acquiring truth. This, indeed, we are in no danger of overlooking. The intellect being the great instrument by which men compass their wishes, it draws more attention than any of our other powers. When we speak to men of improving themselves, the first thought which occurs to them is, that they must cultivate their understanding, and get knowledge and skill. By education, men mean almost exclusively intellectual training. For this, schools and colleges are instituted, and to this the moral and religious discipline of the young is sacrificed. Now I reverence, as much as any man, the intellect; but let us never exalt it above the moral principle. With this it is most intimately connected. In this its culture is founded, and to exalt this is its highest aim. Whoever desires that his intellect may grow up to soundness, to healthy vigor, must begin with moral discipline. Reading and study are not enough to perfect the power of thought. One thing above all is needful, and that is, the Disinterestedness which is the very soul of virtue. To gain truth, which is the great object of the understanding, I must seek it disinterestedly. Here is the first and grand condition of intellectual progress. I must choose to receive the truth, no matter how it bears on myself. I must follow it, no matter where it leads, what interests it opposes, to what persecution or loss it

Hosted by Google

lays me open, from what party it severs me, or to what party it allies. Without this fairness of mind, which is only another phrase for disinterested love of truth, great native powers of understanding are perverted and led astray; genius runs wild; "the light within us becomes darkness." The subtilest reasoners, for want of this, cheat themselves as well as others, and become entangled in the web of their own sophistry. It is a fact well known in the history of science and philosophy, that men, gifted by nature with singular intelligence, have broached the grossest errors, and even sought to undermine the grand primitive truths on which human virtue, dignity, and hope depend. And, on the other hand, I have known instances of men of naturally moderate powers of mind, who, by a disinterested love of truth and their fellow-creatures, have gradually risen to no small force and enlargement of thought. Some of the most useful teachers in the pulpit and in schools, have owed their power of enlightening others, not so much to any natural superiority, as to the simplicity, impartiality, and disinterestedness of their minds, to their readiness to live and die for the truth. A man, who rises above himself, looks from an eminence on nature and providence, on society and life. Thought expands, as by a natural elasticity, when the pressure of selfishness is removed. The moral and religious principles of the soul, generously cultivated, fertilize the intellect. Duty, faithfully performed, opens the mind to truth, both being of one family, alike immutable, universal, and everlasting.

I have enlarged on this subject, because the connexion between moral and intellectual culture is often overlooked, and because the former is often sacrificed to

Hosted by Google

the latter. The exaltation of talent, as it is called, above virtue and religion, is the curse of the age. Education is now chiefly a stimulus to learning, and thus men acquire power without the principles which alone make it a good. Talent is worshipped; but, if divorced from rectitude, it will prove more of a demon than a god.

Intellectual culture consists, not chiefly, as many are apt to think, in accumulating information, though this is important, but in building up a force of thought which may be turned at will on any subjects, on which we are called to pass judgment. This force is manifested in the concentration of the attention, in accurate, penetrating observation, in reducing complex subjects to their elements, in diving beneath the effect to the cause, in detecting the more subtile differences and resemblances of things, in reading the future in the present, and especially in rising from particular facts to general laws or universal truths. This last exertion of the intellect, its rising to broad views and great principles, constitutes what is called the philosophical mind, and is especially worthy of culture. What it means, your own observation must have taught you. You must have taken note of two classes of men, the one always employed on details, on particular facts, and the other using these facts as foundations of higher, wider truths. The latter are philosophers. For example, men had for ages seen pieces of wood, stones, metals falling to the ground. Newton seized on these particular facts, and rose to the idea, that all matter tends, or is attracted, towards all matter, and then defined the law according to which this attraction or force acts at different distances, thus giving us a grand principle, which, we

Hosted by Google

have reason to think, extends to and controls the whole outward creation. One man reads a history, and can tell you all its events, and there stops. Another combines these events, brings them under one view, and learns the great causes which are at work on this or another nation, and what are its great tendencies, whether to freedom or despotism, to one or another form of civilization. So, one man talks continually about the particular actions of this or another neighbour; whilst another looks beyond the acts to the inward principle from which they spring, and gathers from them larger views of human nature. In a word, one man sees all things apart and in fragments, whilst another strives to discover the harmony, connexion, unity of all. One of the great evils of society is, that men, occupied perpetually with petty details, want general truths, want broad and fixed principles. Hence many, not wicked, are unstable, habitually inconsistent, as if they were overgrown children rather than men. To build up that strength of mind, which apprehends and cleaves to great universal truths, is the highest intellectual self-culture; and here I wish you to observe how entirely this culture agrees with that of the moral and the religious principles of our nature, of which I have previously spoken. In each of these, the improvement of the soul consists in raising it above what is narrow, particular, individual, selfish, to the universal and unconfined. To improve a man, is to liberalize, enlarge him in thought, feeling, and purpose Narrowness of intellect and heart, this is the degradation from which all culture aims to rescue the human being.

Again. Self-culture is social, or one of its great offices is to unfold and purify the affections, which spring

Hosted by Google

up instinctively in the human breast, which bind together husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister; which bind a man to friends and neighbours, to his country, and to the suffering who fall under his eye, wherever they belong. The culture of these is an important part of our work, and it consists in converting them from instincts into principles, from natural into spiritual attachments, in giving them a rational, moral, and holy character. For example, our affection for our children is at first instinctive; and if it continue such, it rises little above the brute's attachment to its young. But when a parent infuses into his natural love for his offspring, moral and religious principle, when he comes to regard his child as an intelligent, spiritual, immortal being, and honors him as such, and desires first of all to make him disinterested, noble, a worthy child of God and the friend of his race, then the instinct rises into a generous and holy sentiment. It resembles God's paternal love for his spiritual family. A like purity and dignity we must aim to give to all our affections.

Again. Self-culture is Practical, or it proposes, as one of its chief ends, to fit us for action, to make us efficient in whatever we undertake, to train us to firmness of purpose and to fruitfulness of resource in common life, and especially in emergencies, in times of difficulty, danger, and trial. But passing over this and other topics for which I have no time, I shall confine myself to two branches of self-culture which have been almost wholly overlooked in the education of the people, and which ought not to be so slighted.

In looking at our nature, we discover, among its admirable endowments, the sense or perception of Beauty. We see the germ of this in every human being, and

Hosted by Google

there is no power which admits greater cultivation; and why should it not be cherished in all? It deserves remark, that the provision for this principle is infinite in the universe. There is but a very minute portion of the creation which we can turn into food and clothes, or gratification for the body; but the whole creation may be used to minister to the sense of beauty. Beauty is an all-pervading presence. It unfolds in the numberless flowers of the spring. It waves in the branches of the trees and the green blades of grass. It haunts the depths of the earth and sea, and gleams out in the hues of the shell and the precious stone. And not only these minute objects, but the ocean, the mountains, the clouds, the heavens, the stars, the rising and setting sun, all overflow with beauty. The universe is its temple; and those men, who are alive to it, cannot lift their eyes without feeling themselves encompassed with it on every side. Now this beauty is so precious, the enjoyments it gives are so refined and pure, so congenial with our tenderest and noble feelings, and so akin to worship, that it is painful to think of the multitude of men as living in the midst of it, and living almost as blind to it, as if, instead of this fair earth and glorious sky, they were tenants of a dungeon. An infinite joy is lost to the world by the want of culture of this spiritual endowment. Suppose that I were to visit a cottage, and to see its walls lined with the choicest pictures of Raphael, and every spare nook filled with statues of the most exquisite workmanship, and that I were to learn, that neither man, woman, nor child ever cast an eye at these miracles of art, how should I feel their privation; how should I want to open their eyes, and to help them to comprehend and feel the loveliness and

Hosted by Google

grandeur which in vain courted their notice! But every husbandman is living in sight of the works of a diviner Artist; and how much would his existence be elevated, could he see the glory which shines forth in their forms, hues, proportions, and moral expression! I have spoken only of the beauty of nature, but how much of this mysterious charm is found in the elegant arts, and especially in literature? The best books have most beauty. The greatest truths are wronged if not linked with beauty, and they win their way most surely and deeply into the soul when arrayed in this their natural and fit attire. Now no man receives the true culture of a man, in whom the sensibility to the beautiful is not cherished; and I know of no condition in life from which it should be excluded. Of all luxuries, this is the cheapest and most at hand; and it seems to me to be most important to those conditions, where coarse labor tends to give a grossness to the mind. From the diffusion of the sense of beauty in ancient Greece, and of the taste for music in modern Germany, we learn that the people at large may partake of refined gratifications, which have hitherto been thought to be necessarily restricted to a few.

What beauty is, is a question which the most penetrating minds have not satisfactorily answered; nor, were I able, is this the place for discussing it. But one thing I would say; the beauty of the outward creation is intimately related to the lovely, grand, interesting attributes of the soul. It is the emblem or expression of these. Matter becomes beautiful to us, when it seems to lose its material aspect, its inertness, finiteness, and grossness, and by the etherial lightness of its forms and motions seems to approach spirit; when it

Hosted by Google

images to us pure and gentle affections; when it spreads out into a vastness which is a shadow of the Infinite; or when in more awful shapes and movements it speaks of the Omnipotent. Thus outward beauty is akin to something deeper and unseen, is the reflection of spiritual attributes; and of consequence the way to see and feel it more and more keenly, is to cultivate those moral, religious, intellectual, and social principles of which I have already spoken, and which are the glory of the spiritual nature; and I name this, that you may see, what I am anxious to show, the harmony which subsists among all branches of human culture, or how each forwards and is aided by all.

There is another power, which each man should cultivate according to his ability, but which is very much neglected in the mass of the people, and that is, the power of Utterance. A man was not made to shut up his mind in itself; but to give it voice and to exchange it for other minds. Speech is one of our grand distinctions from the brute. Our power over others lies not so much in the amount of thought within us, as in the power of bringing it out. A man, of more than ordinary intellectual vigor, may, for want of expression, be a cipher, without significance, in society. And not only does a man influence others, but he greatly aids his own intellect, by giving distinct and forcible utterance to his thoughts. We understand ourselves better, our conceptions grow clearer, by the very effort to make them clear to another. Our social rank, too, depends a good deal on our power of utterance. The principal distinction between what are called gentlemen and the vulgar lies in this, that the latter are awkward in manners, and are especially wanting in propriety, clearness.

Hosted by Google

grace, and force of utterance. A man who cannot open his lips without breaking a rule of grammar, without showing in his dialect or brogue or uncouth tones his want of cultivation, or without darkening his meaning by a confused, unskilful mode of communication, cannot take the place to which, perhaps, his native good sense entitles him. To have intercourse with respectable people, we must speak their language. On this account, I am glad that grammar and a correct pronunciation are taught in the common schools of this city. These are not trifles; nor are they superfluous to any class of people. They give a man access to social advantages, on which his improvement very much depends. The power of utterance should be included by all in their plans of self-culture.

I have now given a few views of the culture, the improvement, which every man should propose to himself. I have all along gone on the principle, that a man has within him capacities of growth, which deserve and will reward intense, unrelaxing toil. I do not look on a human being as a machine, made to be kept in action by a foreign force, to accomplish an unvarying succession of motions, to do a fixed amount of work, and then to fall to pieces at death, but as a being of free spiritual powers; and I place little value on any culture, but that which aims to bring out these and to give them perpetual impulse and expansion. I am aware, that this view is far from being universal. The common notion has been, that the mass of the people need no other culture than is necessary to fit them for their various trades; and, though this error is passing away, it is far from being exploded. But the ground of a

Hosted by Google

man's culture lies in his nature, not in his calling. His powers are to be unfolded on account of their inherent dignity, not their outward direction. He is to be educated, because he is a man, not because he is to make shoes, nails, or pins. A trade is plainly not the great end of his being, for his mind cannot be shut up in it; his force of thought cannot be exhausted on it. He has faculties to which it gives no action, and deep wants it cannot answer. Poems, and systems of theology and philosophy, which have made some noise in the world, have been wrought at the work-bench and amidst the toils of the field. How often, when the arms are mechanically plying a trade, does the mind, lost in reverie or day-dreams, escape to the ends of the earth! How often does the pious heart of woman mingle the greatest of all thoughts, that of God, with household drudgery! Undoubtedly a man is to perfect himself in his trade, for by it he is to earn his bread and to serve the community. But bread or subsistence is not his highest good; for, if it were, his lot would be harder than that of the inferior animals, for whom nature spreads a table and weaves a wardrobe, without a care of their own. Nor was he made chiefly to minister to the wants of the community. A rational, moral being cannot, without infinite wrong, be converted into a mere instrument of others' gratification. He is necessarily an end, not a means. A mind, in which are sown the seeds of wisdom, disinterestedness, firmness of purpose, and piety, is worth more than all the outward material interests of a world. It exists for itself, for its own perfection, and must not be enslaved to its own or others' animal wants. You tell me, that a liberal culture is needed for men who are to fill high stations, but not for such as are

Hosted by Google

doomed to vulgar labor. I answer, that Man is a greater name than President or King. Truth and goodness are equally precious, in whatever sphere they are found. Besides, men of all conditions sustain equally the relations, which give birth to the highest virtues and demand the highest powers. The laborer is not a mere laborer. He has close, tender, responsible connections with God and his fellow-creatures. He is a son, husband, father, friend, and Christian. He belongs to a home, a country, a church, a race; and is such a man to be cultivated only for a trade? Was he not sent into the world for a great work? To educate a child perfectly requires profounder thought, greater wisdom, than to govern a state; and for this plain reason, that the interests and wants of the latter are more superficial, coarser, and more obvious, than the spiritual capacities, the growth of thought and feeling, and the subtile laws of the mind, which must all be studied and comprehended, before the work of education can be thoroughly performed; and yet to all conditions this greatest work on earth is equally committed by God. What plainer proof do we need that a higher culture, than has yet been dreamed of, is needed by our whole race?

II. I now proceed to inquire into the Means, by which the self-culture, just described, may be promoted; and here I know not where to begin. The subject is so extensive, as well as important, that I feel myself unable to do any justice to it, especially in the limits to which I am confined. I beg you to consider me as presenting but hints, and such as have offered themselves with very little research to my own mind.

Hosted by Google

And, first, the great means of self-culture, that which includes all the rest, is to fasten on this culture as our Great End, to determine deliberately and solemnly, that we will make the most and the best of the powers which God has given us. Without this resolute purpose, the best means are worth little, and with it the poorest become mighty. You may see thousands, with every opportunity of improvement which wealth can gather, with teachers, libraries, and apparatus, bringing nothing to pass, and others, with few helps, doing wonders; and simply because the latter are in earnest, and the former not. A man in earnest finds means, or, if he cannot find, creates them. A vigorous purpose makes much out of little, breathes power into weak instruments, disarms difficulties, and even turns them into assistances. Every condition has means of progress, if we have spirit enough to use them. Some volumes have recently been published, giving examples or histories of "knowledge acquired under difficulties"; and it is most animating to see in these what a resolute man can do for himself. A great idea, like this of Self-culture, if seized on clearly and vigorously, burns like a living coal in the soul. He who deliberately adopts a great end, has, by this act, half accomplished it, has scaled the chief barrier to success.

One thing is essential to the strong purpose of self-culture now insisted on, namely, faith in the practicableness of this culture. A great object, to awaken resolute choice, must be seen to be within our reach. The truth, that progress is the very end of our being, must not be received as a tradition, but comprehended and felt as a reality. Our minds are apt to pine and starve, by being imprisoned within what we have already at-

Hosted by Google

tained. A true faith, looking up to something better, catching glimpses of a distant perfection, prophesying to ourselves improvements proportioned to our conscientious labors, gives energy of purpose, gives wings to the soul; and this faith will continually grow, by acquainting ourselves with our own nature, and with the promises of Divine help and immortal life which abound in Revelation.

Some are discouraged from proposing to themselves improvement, by the false notion, that the study of books, which their situation denies them, is the all-important, and only sufficient means. Let such consider, that the grand volumes, of which all our books are transcripts, I mean nature, revelation, the human soul, and human life, are freely unfolded to every eye. The great sources of wisdom are experience and observation; and these are denied to none. To open and fix our eyes upon what passes without and within us, is the most fruitful study. Books are chiefly useful, as they help us to interpret what we see and experience. When they absorb men, as they sometimes do, and turn them from observation of nature and life, they generate a learned folly, for which the plain sense of the laborer could not be exchanged but at great loss. It deserves attention that the greatest men have been formed without the studies, which at present are thought by many most needful to improvement. Homer, Plato, Demosthenes, never heard the name of chemistry, and knew less of the solar system than a boy in our common schools. Not that these sciences are unimportant; but the lesson is, that human improvement never wants the means, where the purpose of it is deep and earnest in the soul.

Hosted by Google

The purpose of self-culture, this is the life and strength of all the methods we use for our own elevation. I reiterate this principle on account of its great importance; and I would add a remark to prevent its misapprehension. When I speak of the purpose of self-culture, I mean, that it should be sincere. In other words, we must make self-culture really and truly our end, or choose it for its own sake, and not merely as a means or instrument of something else. And here I touch a common and very pernicious error. Not a few persons desire to improve themselves only to get property and to rise in the world; but such do not properly choose improvement, but something outward and foreign to themselves; and so low an impulse can produce only a stinted, partial, uncertain growth. A man, as I have said, is to cultivate himself because he is a man. He is to start with the conviction, that there is something greater within him than in the whole material creation, than in all the worlds which press on the eye and ear; and that inward improvements have a worth and dignity in themselves, quite distinct from the power they give over outward things. Undoubtedly a man is to labor to better his condition, but first to better himself. If he knows no higher use of his mind than to invent and drudge for his body, his case is desperate as far as culture is concerned.

In these remarks, I do not mean to recommend to the laborer indifference to his outward lot. I hold it important, that every man in every class should possess the means of comfort, of health, of neatness in food and apparel, and of occasional retirement and leisure. These are good in themselves, to be sought for their own sakes, and still more, they are important means of

Hosted by Google

the self-culture for which I am pleading. A clean, comfortable dwelling, with wholesome meals, is no small aid to intellectual and moral progress. A man living in a damp cellar or a garret open to rain and snow, breathing the foul air of a filthy room, and striving without success to appease hunger on scanty or unsavory food, is in danger of abandoning himself to a desperate, selfish recklessness. Improve then your lot. Multiply comforts, and still more get wealth if you can by honorable means, and if it do not cost too much. A true cultivation of the mind is fitted to forward you in your worldly concerns, and you ought to use it for this end. Only, beware, lest this end master you; lest your motives sink as your condition improves; lest you fall victims to the miserable passion of vying with those around you in show, luxury, and expense. Cherish a true respect for yourselves. Feel that your nature is worth more than every thing which is foreign to you. He who has not caught a glimpse of his own rational and spiritual being, of something within himself superior to the world and allied to the divinity, wants the true spring of that purpose of self-culture, on which I have insisted as the first of all the means of improvement.

I proceed to another important means of self-culture, and this is the control of the animal appetites. To raise the moral and intellectual nature, we must put down the animal. Sensuality is the abyss in which very many souls are plunged and lost. Among the most prosperous classes, what a vast amount of intellectual life is drowned in luxurious excesses! It is one great curse of wealth, that it is used to pamper the senses; and among the poorer classes, though luxury

Hosted by Google

is wanting, yet a gross feeding often prevails, under which the spirit is whelmed. It is a sad sight to walk through our streets, and to see how many countenances bear marks of a lethargy and a brutal coarseness, induced by unrestrained indulgence. Whoever would cultivate the soul, must restrain the appetites. I am not an advocate for the doctrine, that animal food was not meant for man; but that this is used among us to excess, that as a people we should gain much in cheerfulness, activity, and buoyancy of mind, by less gross and stimulating food, I am strongly inclined to believe. Above all, let me urge on those, who would bring out and elevate their higher nature, to abstain from the use of spirituous liquors. This bad habit is distinguished from all others by the ravages it makes on the reason, the intellect; and this effect is produced to a mournful extent, even when drunkenness is escaped. Not a few men, called temperate, and who have thought themselves such, have learned, on abstaining from the use of ardent spirits, that for years their minds had been clouded, impaired by moderate drinking, without their suspecting the injury. Multitudes in this city are bereft of half their intellectual energy, by a degree of indulgence which passes for innocent. Of all the foes of the working class, this is the deadliest. Nothing has done more to keep down this class, to destroy their self-respect, to rob them of their just influence in the community, to render profitless the means of improvement within their reach, than the use of ardent spirits as a drink. They are called on to withstand this practice, as they regard their honor, and would take their just place in society. They are under solemn obligations to give their sanction to every effort for its suppression.

Hosted by Google

They ought to regard as their worst enemies (though unintentionally such), as the enemies of their rights, dignity, and influence, the men who desire to flood city and country with distilled poison. I lately visited a flourishing village, and on expressing to one of the respected inhabitants the pleasure I felt in witnessing so many signs of progress, he replied, that one of the causes of the prosperity I witnessed, was the disuse of ardent spirits by the people. And this reformation we may be assured wrought something higher than outward prosperity. In almost every family so improved, we cannot doubt that the capacities of the parent for intellectual and moral improvement were enlarged, and the means of education made more effectual to the child. I call on working men to take hold of the cause of temperance as peculiarly *their* cause. These remarks are the more needed, in consequence of the efforts made far and wide, to annul at the present moment a recent law for the suppression of the sale of ardent spirits in such quantities as favor intemperance. I know, that there are intelligent and good men, who believe, that, in enacting this law, government transcended its limits, left its true path, and established a precedent for legislative interference with all our pursuits and pleasures. No one here looks more jealously on government than myself. But I maintain, that this is a case which stands by itself, which can be confounded with no other, and on which government from its very nature and end is peculiarly bound to act. Let it never be forgotten, that the great end of government, its highest function, is, not to make roads, grant charters, originate improvements, but to prevent or repress Crimes against individual rights and social order. For this end it ordains

Hosted by Google

a penal code, erects prisons, and inflicts fearful punishments. Now if it be true, that a vast proportion of the crimes, which government is instituted to prevent and repress, have their origin in the use of ardent spirits; if our poor-houses, work-houses, jails, and penitentiaries, are tenanted in a great degree by those whose first and chief impulse to crime came from the distillery and dram-shop; if murder and theft, the most fearful outrages on property and life, are most frequently the issues and consummation of intemperance, is not government bound to restrain by legislation the vending of the stimulus to these terrible social wrongs? Is government never to act as a parent, never to remove the causes or occasions of wrong-doing? Has it but one instrument for repressing crime, namely, public, infamous punishment, an evil only inferior to crime? Is government a usurper, does it wander beyond its sphere, by imposing restraints on an article, which does no imaginable good, which can plead no benefit conferred on body or mind, which unfits the citizen for the discharge of his duty to his country, and which, above all, stirs up men to the perpetration of most of the crimes, from which it is the highest and most solemn office of government to protect society?

I come now to another important measure of self-culture, and this is, intercourse with superior minds. I have insisted on our own activity as essential to our progress; but we were not made to live or advance alone. Society is as needful to us as air or food. A child doomed to utter loneliness, growing up without sight or sound of human beings, would not put forth equal power with many brutes; and a man, never brought

Hosted by Google

into contact with minds superior to his own, will probably run one and the same dull round of thought and action to the end of life.

It is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds, and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours. God be thanked for books. They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all, who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am. No matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling. If the Sacred Writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof, if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise, and Shakspeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.

To make this means of culture effectual, a man must select good books, such as have been written by right-minded and strong-minded men, real thinkers, who instead of diluting by repetition what others say, have something to say for themselves, and write to give relief to full, earnest souls; and these works must not be skimmed over for amusement, but read with fixed attention and a reverential love of truth. In selecting books, we may be aided much by those who have studied more

Hosted by Google

than ourselves. But, after all, it is best to be determined in this particular a good deal by our own tastes. The best books for a man are not always those which the wise recommend, but oftener those which meet the peculiar wants, the natural thirst of his mind, and therefore awaken interest and rivet thought. And here it may be well to observe, not only in regard to books but in other respects, that self-culture must vary with the individual. All means do not equally suit us all. A man must unfold himself freely, and should respect the peculiar gifts or biases by which nature has distinguished him from others. Self-culture does not demand the sacrifice of individuality. It does not regularly apply an established machinery, for the sake of torturing every man into one rigid shape, called perfection. As the human countenance, with the same features in us all, is diversified without end in the race, and is never the same in any two individuals, so the human soul, with the same grand powers and laws, expands into an infinite variety of forms, and would be wofully stinted by modes of culture requiring all men to learn the same lesson or to bend to the same rules.

I know how hard it is to some men, especially to those who spend much time in manual labor, to fix attention on books. Let them strive to overcome the difficulty, by choosing subjects of deep interest, or by reading in company with those whom they love. Nothing can supply the place of books. They are cheering or soothing companions in solitude, illness, affliction. The wealth of both continents would not compensate for the good they impart. Let every man, if possible, gather some good books under his roof, and obtain access for himself and family to some social library. Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this.

Hosted by Google

One of the very interesting features of our times, is the multiplication of books, and their distribution through all conditions of society. At a small expense, a man can now possess himself of the most precious treasures of English literature. Books, once confined to a few by their costliness, are now accessible to the multitude; and in this way a change of habits is going on in society, highly favorable to the culture of the people. Instead of depending on casual rumor and loose conversation for most of their knowledge and objects of thought; instead of forming their judgments in crowds, and receiving their chief excitement from the voice of neighbours, men are now learning to study and reflect alone, to follow out subjects continuously, to determine for themselves what shall engage their minds, and to call to their aid the knowledge, original views, and reasonings of men of all countries and ages; and the results must be, a deliberateness and independence of judgment, and a thoroughness and extent of information, unknown in former times. The diffusion of these silent teachers, books, through the whole community, is to work greater effects than artillery, machinery, and legislation. Its peaceful agency is to supersede stormy revolutions. The culture, which it is to spread, whilst an unspeakable good to the individual, is also to become the stability of nations.

Another important means of self-culture, is to free ourselves from the power of human opinion and example, except as far as this is sanctioned by our own deliberate judgment. We are all prone to keep the level of those we live with, to repeat their words, and dress our minds as well as bodies after their fashion; and

Hosted by Google

hence the spiritless tameness of our characters and lives. Our greatest danger, is not from the grossly wicked around us, but from the worldly, unreflecting multitude, who are borne along as a stream by foreign impulse, and bear us along with them. Even the influence of superior minds may harm us, by bowing us to servile acquiescence and damping our spiritual activity. The great use of intercourse with other minds, is to stir up our own, to whet our appetite for truth, to carry our thoughts beyond their old tracks. We need connexions with great thinkers to make us thinkers too. One of the chief arts of self-culture, is to unite the childlike teachableness, which gratefully welcomes light from every human being who can give it, with manly resistance of opinions however current, of influences however generally revered, which do not approve themselves to our deliberate judgment. You ought indeed patiently and conscientiously to strengthen your reason by other men's intelligence, but you must not prostrate it before them. Especially if there springs up within you any view of God's word or universe, any sentiment or aspiration which seems to you of a higher order than what you meet abroad, give reverent heed to it; inquire into it earnestly, solemnly. Do not trust it blindly, for it may be an illusion; but it may be the Divinity moving within you, a new revelation, not supernatural but still most precious, of truth or duty; and if, after inquiry, it so appear, then let no clamor, or scorn, or desertion turn you from it. Be true to your own highest convictions. Intimations from our own souls of something more perfect than others teach, if faithfully followed, give us a consciousness of spiritual force and progress, never experienced by the vulgar of high life or low life, who march, as they are drilled, to the step of their times.

Hosted by Google

Some, I know, will wonder, that I should think the mass of the people capable of such intimations and glimpses of truth, as I have just supposed. These are commonly thought to be the prerogative of men of genius, who seem to be born to give law to the minds of the multitude. Undoubtedly nature has her nobility, and sends forth a few to be eminently "lights of the world." But it is also true that a portion of the same divine fire is given to all; for the many could not receive with a loving reverence the quickening influences of the few, were there not essentially the same spiritual life in both. The minds of the multitude are not masses of passive matter, created to receive impressions unresistingly from abroad. They are not wholly shaped by foreign instruction; but have a native force, a spring of thought in themselves. Even the child's mind outruns its lessons, and overflows in questionings which bring the wisest to a stand. Even the child starts the great problems, which philosophy has labored to solve for ages. But on this subject I cannot now enlarge. Let me only say, that the power of original thought is particularly manifested in those who thirst for progress, who are bent on unfolding their whole nature. A man who wakes up to the consciousness of having been created for progress and perfection, looks with new eyes on himself and on the world in which he lives. This great truth stirs the soul from its depths, breaks up old associations of ideas, and establishes new ones, just as a mighty agent of chemistry, brought into contact with natural substances, dissolves the old affinities which had bound their particles together, and arranges them anew. This truth particularly aids us to penetrate the mysteries of human life. By revealing to us the end of our being, it helps

Hosted by Google

us to comprehend more and more the wonderful, the infinite system, to which we belong. A man in the common walks of life, who has faith in perfection, in the unfolding of the human spirit, as the great purpose of God, possesses more the secret of the universe, perceives more the harmonies or mutual adaptations of the world without and the world within him, is a wiser interpreter of Providence, and reads nobler lessons of duty in the events which pass before him, than the profoundest philosopher who wants this grand central truth. Thus illuminations, inward suggestions, are not confined to a favored few, but visit all who devote themselves to a generous self-culture.

Another means of self-culture may be found by every man in his Condition or Occupation, be it what it may. Had I time, I might go through all conditions of life, from the most conspicuous to the most obscure, and might show how each furnishes continual aids to improvement. But I will take one example, and that is, of a man living by manual labor. This may be made the means of self-culture. For instance, in almost all labor, a man exchanges his strength for an equivalent in the form of wages, purchase-money, or some other product. In other words, labor is a system of contracts, bargains, imposing mutual obligations. Now the man, who, in working, no matter in what way, strives perpetually to fulfil his obligations thoroughly, to do his whole work faithfully, to be honest not because honesty is the best policy, but for the sake of justice, and that he may render to every man his due, such a laborer is continually building up in himself one of the greatest principles of morality and religion. Every blow on the anvil, on

Hosted by Google

the earth, or whatever material he works upon, contributes something to the perfection of his nature.

Nor is this all. Labor is a school of benevolence as well as justice. A man to support himself must serve others. He must do or produce something for their comfort or gratification. This is one of the beautiful ordinations of Providence, that, to get a living, a man must be useful. Now this usefulness ought to be an end in his labor as truly as to earn his living. He ought to think of the benefit of those he works for, as well as of his own; and in so doing, in desiring amidst his sweat and toil to serve others as well as himself, he is exercising and growing in benevolence, as truly as if he were distributing bounty with a large hand to the poor. Such a motive hallows and dignifies the commonest pursuit. It is strange, that laboring men do not think more of the vast usefulness of their toils, and take a benevolent pleasure in them on this account. This beautiful city, with its houses, furniture, markets, public walks, and numberless accommodations, has grown up under the hands of artisans and other laborers, and ought they not to take a disinterested joy in their work? One would think, that a carpenter or mason, on passing a house which he had reared, would say to himself, "This work of mine is giving comfort and enjoyment every day and hour to a family, and will continue to be a kindly shelter, a domestic gathering-place, an abode of affection, for a century or more after I sleep in the dust;" and ought not a generous satisfaction to spring up at the thought? It is by thus interweaving goodness with common labors, that we give it strength and make it a habit of the soul.

Again. Labor may be so performed as to be a high impulse to the mind. Be a man's vocation what it may,

Hosted by Google

his rule should be to do its duties perfectly, to do the best he can, and thus to make perpetual progress in his art. In other words, Perfection should be proposed; and this I urge not only for its usefulness to society, nor for the sincere pleasure which a man takes in seeing a work well done. This is an important means of self-culture. In this way the idea of Perfection takes root in the mind, and spreads far beyond the man's trade. He gets a tendency towards completeness in whatever he undertakes. Slack, slovenly performance in any department of life is more apt to offend him. His standard of action rises, and every thing is better done for his thoroughness in his common vocation.

There is one circumstance attending all conditions of life, which may and ought to be turned to the use of self-culture. Every condition, be it what it may, has hardships, hazards, pains. We try to escape them; we pine for a sheltered lot, for a smooth path, for cheering friends, and unbroken success. But Providence ordains storms, disasters, hostilities, sufferings; and the great question, whether we shall live to any purpose or not, whether we shall grow strong in mind and heart, or be weak and pitiable, depends on nothing so much as on our use of these adverse circumstances. Outward evils are designed to school our passions, and to rouse our faculties and virtues into intenser action. Sometimes they seem to create new powers. Difficulty is the element, and resistance the true work of a man. Self-culture never goes on so fast, as when embarrassed circumstances, the opposition of men or the elements, unexpected changes of the times, or other forms of suffering, instead of disheartening, throw us on our inward resources, turn us for strength to God, clear up to

Hosted by Google

us the great purpose of life, and inspire calm resolution. No greatness or goodness is worth much, unless tried in these fires. Hardships are not on this account to be sought for. They come fast enough of themselves, and we are in more danger of sinking under, than of needing them. But when God sends them, they are noble means of self-culture, and as such, let us meet and bear them cheerfully. Thus all parts of our condition may be pressed into the service of self-improvement.

I have time to consider but one more means of self-culture. We find it in our Free Government, in our Political relations and duties. It is a great benefit of free institutions, that they do much to awaken and keep in action a nation's mind. We are told, that the education of the multitude is necessary to the support of a republic; but it is equally true, that a republic is a powerful means of educating the multitude. It is the people's University. In a free state, solemn responsibilities are imposed on every citizen; great subjects are to be discussed; great interests to be decided. The individual is called to determine measures affecting the well-being of millions and the destinies of posterity. He must consider not only the internal relations of his native land, but its connexion with foreign states, and judge of a policy which touches the whole civilized world. He is called by his participation in the national sovereignty, to cherish public spirit, a regard to the general weal. A man who purposes to discharge faithfully these obligations, is carrying on a generous self-culture. The great public questions, which divide opinion around him and provoke earnest discussion, of necessity invigorate his intellect, and accustom him to look beyond

Hosted by Google

himself. He grows up to a robustness, force, enlargement of mind, unknown under despotic rule.

It may be said that I am describing what free institutions ought to do for the character of the individual, not their actual effects; and the objection, I must own, is too true. Our institutions do not cultivate us, as they might and should; and the chief cause of the failure is plain. It is the strength of party-spirit; and so blighting is its influence, so fatal to self-culture, that I feel myself bound to warn every man against it, who has any desire of improvement. I do not tell you it will destroy your country. It wages a worse war against yourselves. Truth, justice, candor, fair dealing, sound judgment, self-control, and kind affections, are its natural and perpetual prey.

I do not say, that you must take no side in politics. The parties which prevail around you differ in character, principles, and spirit, though far less than the exaggeration of passion affirms; and, as far as conscience allows, a man should support that which he thinks best. In one respect, however, all parties agree. They all foster that pestilent spirit, which I now condemn. In all of them, party-spirit rages. Associate men together for a common cause, be it good or bad, and array against them a body resolutely pledged to an opposite interest, and a new passion, quite distinct from the original sentiment which brought them together, a fierce, fiery zeal, consisting chiefly of aversion to those who differ from them, is roused within them into fearful activity. Human nature seems incapable of a stronger, more unrelenting passion. It is hard enough for an individual, when contending all alone for an interest or an opinion, to keep down his pride, wilfulness, love of

Hosted by Google

victory, anger, and other personal feelings. But let him join a multitude in the same warfare, and, without singular self-control, he receives into his single breast, the vehemence, obstinacy, and vindictiveness of all. The triumph of his party becomes immeasurably dearer to him than the principle, true or false, which was the original ground of division. The conflict becomes a struggle, not for principle, but for power, for victory; and the desperateness, the wickedness of such struggles, is the great burden of history. In truth, it matters little what men divide about, whether it be a foot of land or precedence in a procession. Let them but begin to fight for it, and self-will, ill-will, the rage for victory, the dread of mortification and defeat, make the trifle as weighty as a matter of life and death. The Greek or Eastern empire was shaken to its foundation by parties, which differed only about the merits of charioteers at the amphitheatre. Party spirit is singularly hostile to moral independence. A man, in proportion as he drinks into it, sees, hears, judges by the senses and understandings of his party. He surrenders the freedom of a man, the right of using and speaking his own mind, and echoes the applauses or maledictions, with which the leaders or passionate partisans see fit that the country should ring. On all points, parties are to be distrusted; but on no one so much as on the character of opponents. These, if you may trust what you hear, are always men without principle and truth, devoured by selfishness, and thirsting for their own elevation, though on their country's ruin. When I was young, I was accustomed to hear pronounced with abhorrence, almost with execration, the names of men, who are now hailed by their former foes as the champions of grand princi-

Hosted by Google

ples, and as worthy of the highest public trusts. This lesson of early experience, which later years have corroborated, will never be forgotten.

Of our present political divisions I have of course nothing to say. But among the current topics of party, there are certain accusations and recriminations, grounded on differences of social condition, which seem to me so unfriendly to the improvement of individuals and the community, that I ask the privilege of giving them a moment's notice. On one side we are told, that the rich are disposed to trample on the poor; and on the other, that the poor look with evil eye and hostile purpose on the possessions of the rich. These outcries seem to me alike devoid of truth and alike demoralizing. As for the rich, who constitute but a handful of our population, who possess not one peculiar privilege, and, what is more, who possess comparatively little of the property of the country, it is wonderful, that they should be objects of alarm. The vast and ever-growing property of this country, where is it? Locked up in a few hands? hoarded in a few strong boxes? It is diffused like the atmosphere, and almost as variable, changing hands with the seasons, shifting from rich to poor, not by the violence but by the industry and skill of the latter class. The wealth of the rich is as a drop in the ocean; and it is a well-known fact, that those men among us, who are noted for their opulence, exert hardly any political power on the community. That the rich do their whole duty; that they adopt, as they should, the great object of the social state, which is the elevation of the people in intelligence, character, and condition, cannot be pretended; but that they feel for the physical sufferings of their brethren, that they stretch out liberal

Hosted by Google

hands for the succour of the poor, and for the support of useful public institutions, cannot be denied. Among them are admirable specimens of humanity. There is no warrant for holding them up to suspicion as the people's foes.

Nor do I regard as less calumnious the outcry against the working classes, as if they were aiming at the subversion of property. When we think of the general condition and character of this part of our population, when we recollect, that they were born and have lived amidst schools and churches, that they have been brought up to profitable industry, that they enjoy many of the accommodations of life, that most of them hold a measure of property and are hoping for more, that they possess unprecedented means of bettering their lot, that they are bound to comfortable homes by strong domestic affections, that they are able to give their children an education which places within their reach the prizes of the social state, that they are trained to the habits, and familiarized to the advantages of a high civilization; when we recollect these things, can we imagine that they are so insanely blind to their interests, so deaf to the claims of justice and religion, so profligately thoughtless of the peace and safety of their families, as to be prepared to make a wreck of social order, for the sake of dividing among themselves the spoils of the rich, which would not support the community for a month? Undoubtedly there is insecurity in all stages of society, and so there must be, until communities shall be regenerated by a higher culture, reaching and quickening all classes of the people; but there is not, I believe, a spot on earth, where property is safer than here, because, nowhere else is it so equally and righteously dif-

Hosted by Google

fused. In aristocracies, where wealth exists in enormous masses, which have been entailed for ages by a partial legislation on a favored few, and where the multitude, after the sleep of ages, are waking up to intelligence, to self-respect, and to a knowledge of their rights, property is exposed to shocks which are not to be dreaded among ourselves. Here indeed as elsewhere, among the less prosperous members of the community, there are disappointed, desperate men, ripe for tumult and civil strife; but it is also true, that the most striking and honorable distinction of this country is to be found in the intelligence, character, and condition of the great working class. To me it seems, that the great danger to property here is not from the laborer, but from those who are making haste to be rich. For example, in this commonwealth, no act has been thought by the alarmists or the conservatives so subversive of the rights of property, as a recent law, authorizing a company to construct a free bridge, in the immediate neighbourhood of another, which had been chartered by a former legislature, and which had been erected in the expectation of an exclusive right. And with whom did this alleged assault on property originate? With levellers? with needy laborers? with men bent on the prostration of the rich? No; but with men of business, who are anxious to push a more lucrative trade. Again, what occurrence among us has been so suited to destroy confidence, and to stir up the people against the moneyed class, as the late criminal mismanagement of some of our banking institutions? And whence came this? from the rich, or the poor? From the agrarian, or the man of business? Who, let me ask, carry on the work of spoliation most extensively in society? Is not more

Hosted by Google

property wrested from its owners by rash or dishonest failures, than by professed highwaymen and thieves? Have not a few unprincipled speculators sometimes inflicted wider wrongs and sufferings, than all the tenants of a state prison? Thus property is in more danger from those who are aspiring after wealth, than from those who live by the sweat of their brow. I do not believe, however, that the institution is in serious danger from either. All the advances of society in industry, useful arts, commerce, knowledge, jurisprudence, fraternal union, and practical Christianity, are so many hedges around honestly acquired wealth, so many barriers against revolutionary violence and rapacity. Let us not torture ourselves with idle alarms, and still more let us not inflame ourselves against one another by mutual calumnies. Let not class array itself against class where all have a common interest. One way of provoking men to crime, is to suspect them of criminal designs. We do not secure our property against the poor, by accusing them of schemes of universal robbery; nor render the rich better friends of the community, by fixing on them the brand of hostility to the people. Of all parties, those founded on different social conditions are the most pernicious; and in no country on earth are they so groundless as in our own.

Among the best people, especially among the more religious, there are some, who, through disgust with the violence and frauds of parties, withdraw themselves from all political action. Such, I conceive, do wrong. God has placed them in the relations, and imposed on them the duties of citizens; and they are no more authorized to shrink from these duties than from those of sons, husbands, or fathers. They owe a great debt to their

Hosted by Google

country, and must discharge it by giving support to what they deem the best men and the best measures. Nor let them say, that they can do nothing. Every good man, if faithful to his convictions, benefits his country. All parties are kept in check by the spirit of the better portion of people whom they contain. Leaders are always compelled to ask what their party will bear, and to modify their measures, so as not to shock the men of principle within their ranks. A good man, not tamely subservient to the body with which he acts, but judging it impartially, criticizing it freely, bearing testimony against its evils, and withholding his support from wrong, does good to those around him, and is cultivating generously his own mind.

I respectfully counsel those whom I address, to take part in the politics of their country. These are the true discipline of a people, and do much for their education. I counsel you to labor for a clear understanding of the subjects which agitate the community, to make them your study, instead of wasting your leisure in vague, passionate talk about them. The time thrown away by the mass of the people on the rumors of the day, might, if better spent, give them a good acquaintance with the constitution, laws, history, and interests of their country, and thus establish them in those great principles by which particular measures are to be determined. In proportion as the people thus improve themselves, they will cease to be the tools of designing politicians. Their intelligence, not their passions and jealousies, will be addressed by those who seek their votes. They will exert, not a nominal, but a real influence on the government and the destinies of the country, and at the same time will forward their own growth in truth and virtue.

Hosted by Google

I ought not to quit this subject of politics, considered as a means of self-culture, without speaking of newspapers; because these form the chief reading of the bulk of the people. They are the literature of multitudes. Unhappily, their importance is not understood; their bearing on the intellectual and moral cultivation of the community little thought of. A newspaper ought to be conducted by one of our most gifted men, and its income should be such as to enable him to secure the contributions of men as gifted as himself. But we must take newspapers as they are; and a man, anxious for self-culture, may turn them to account, if he will select the best within his reach. He should exclude from his house such as are venomous or scurrilous, as he would a pestilence. He should be swayed in his choice, not merely by the ability with which a paper is conducted, but still more by its spirit, by its justice, fairness, and steady adherence to great principles. Especially, if he would know the truth, let him hear both sides. Let him read the defence as well as the attack. Let him not give his ear to one party exclusively. We condemn ourselves, when we listen to reproaches thrown on an individual and turn away from his exculpation; and is it just to read continual, unsparing invective against large masses of men, and refuse them the opportunity of justifying themselves?

A new class of daily papers has sprung up in our country, sometimes called cent papers, and designed for circulation among those who cannot afford costlier publications. My interest in the working class induced me some time ago to take one of these, and I was gratified to find it not wanting in useful matter. Two things however gave me pain. The advertising columns were

Hosted by Google

devoted very much to patent medicines; and when I considered that a laboring man's whole fortune is his health, I could not but lament, that so much was done to seduce him to the use of articles, more fitted, I fear, to undermine than to restore his constitution. I was also shocked by accounts of trials in the police court. These were written in a style adapted to the most uncultivated minds, and intended to turn into matters of sport the most painful and humiliating events of life. Were the newspapers of the rich to attempt to extract amusement from the vices and miseries of the poor, a cry would be raised against them, and very justly. But is it not something worse, that the poorer classes themselves should seek occasions of laughter and merriment in the degradation, the crimes, the woes, the punishments of their brethren, of those who are doomed to bear like themselves the heaviest burdens of life, and who have sunk under the temptations of poverty? Better go to the hospital, and laugh over the wounds and writhings of the sick or the ravings of the insane, than amuse ourselves with brutal excesses and infernal passions, which not only expose the criminal to the crushing penalties of human laws, but incur the displeasure of Heaven, and, if not repented of, will be followed by the fearful retribution of the life to come.

One important topic remains. That great means of self-improvement, Christianity, is yet untouched, and its greatness forbids me now to approach it. I will only say, that if you study Christianity in its original records, and not in human creeds; if you consider its clear revelations of God, its life-giving promises of pardon and spiritual strength, its correspondence to man's reason, conscience, and best affections, and its adapta-

Hosted by Google

tion to his wants, sorrows, anxieties, and fears; if you consider the strength of its proofs, the purity of its precepts, the divine greatness of the character of its author, and the immortality which it opens before us, you will feel yourselves bound to welcome it joyfully, gratefully, as affording aids and incitements to self-culture, which would vainly be sought in all other means.

I have thus presented a few of the means of self-culture. The topics, now discussed, will I hope suggest others to those who have honored me with their attention, and create an interest which will extend beyond the present hour. I owe it however to truth to make one remark. — I wish to raise no unreasonable hopes. I must say, then, that the means now recommended to you, though they will richly reward every man of every age who will faithfully use them, will yet not produce their full and happiest effect, except in cases where early education has prepared the mind for future improvement. They, whose childhood has been neglected, though they may make progress in future life, can hardly repair the loss of their first years; and I say this, that we may all be excited to save our children from this loss, that we may prepare them, to the extent of our power, for an effectual use of all the means of self-culture, which adult age may bring with it. With these views, I ask you to look with favor on the recent exertions of our legislature and of private citizens, in behalf of our public schools, the chief hope of our country. The legislature has of late appointed a board of education, with a secretary, who is to devote his whole time to the improvement of public schools. An individual more fitted to this responsible office, than

Hosted by Google

the gentleman who now fills it,* cannot, I believe, be found in our community; and if his labors shall be crowned with success, he will earn a title to the gratitude of the good people of this State, unsurpassed by that of any other living citizen. Let me also recall to your minds a munificent individual, † who, by a generous donation, has encouraged the legislature to resolve on the establishment of one or more institutions called Normal Schools, the object of which is, to prepare accomplished teachers of youth, a work, on which the progress of education depends more than on any other measure. The efficient friends of education are the true benefactors of their country, and their names deserve to be handed down to that posterity, for whose highest wants they are generously providing.

There is another mode of advancing education in our whole country, to which I ask your particular attention. You are aware of the vast extent and value of the public lands of the Union. By annual sales of these, large amounts of money are brought into the national treasury, which are applied to the current expenses of the Government. For this application there is no need. In truth, the country has received detriment from the excess of its revenues. Now, I ask, why shall not the public lands be consecrated (in whole or in part, as the case may require) to the education of the people? This measure would secure at once what the country most needs, that is, able, accomplished, quickening teachers of the whole rising generation. The present poor remuneration of instructors is a dark omen, and the only real obstacle which the cause of education has to

* Horace Mann, Esq. † Edmund Dwight, Esq.

Hosted by Google

contend with. We need for our schools gifted men and women, worthy, by their intelligence and their moral power, to be intrusted with a nation's youth; and, to gain these, we must pay them liberally, as well as afford other proofs of the consideration in which we hold them. In the present state of the country, when so many paths of wealth and promotion are opened, superior men cannot be won to an office so responsible and laborious as that of teaching, without stronger inducements than are now offered, except in some of our large cities. The office of instructor ought to rank and be recompensed as one of the most honorable in society; and I see not how this is to be done, at least in our day, without appropriating to it the public domain. This is the people's property, and the only part of their property which is likely to be soon devoted to the support of a high order of institutions for public education. This object, interesting to all classes of society, has peculiar claims on those whose means of improvement are restricted by narrow circumstances. The mass of the people should devote themselves to it as one man, should toil for it with one soul. Mechanics, Farmers, Laborers! let the country echo with your united cry, "The Public Lands for Education." Send to the public councils men who will plead this cause with power. No party triumphs, no trades-unions, no associations, can so contribute to elevate you as the measure now proposed. Nothing but a higher education can raise you in influence and true dignity. The resources of the public domain, wisely applied for successive generations to the culture of society and of the individual, would create a new people, would awaken through this community intellectual and moral energies, such as the records of no country

Hosted by Google

display, and as would command the respect and emulation of the civilized world. In this grand object, the working men of all parties, and in all divisions of the land, should join with an enthusiasm not to be withstood. They should separate it from all narrow and local strifes. They should not suffer it to be mixed up with the schemes of politicians. In it, they and their children have an infinite stake. May they be true to themselves, to posterity, to their country, to freedom, to the cause of mankind.

III. I am aware, that the whole doctrine of this discourse will meet with opposition. There are not a few who will say to me, "What you tell us sounds well; but it is impracticable. Men, who dream in their closets, spin beautiful theories; but actual life scatters them, as the wind snaps the cobweb. You would have all men to be cultivated; but necessity wills that most men shall work; and which of the two is likely to prevail? A weak sentimentality may shrink from the truth; still it *is* true, that most men were made, not for self-culture, but for toil."

I have put the objection into strong language, that we may all look it fairly in the face. For one I deny its validity. Reason, as well as sentiment, rises up against it. The presumption is certainly very strong, that the All-wise Father, who has given to every human being reason and conscience and affection, intended that these should be unfolded; and it is hard to believe, that He, who, by conferring this nature on all men, has made all his children, has destined the great majority to wear out a life of drudgery and unimproving toil, for the benefit of a few. God cannot have made spiritual

Hosted by Google

beings to be dwarfed. In the body we see no organs created to shrivel by disuse; much less are the powers of the soul given to be locked up in perpetual lethargy.

Perhaps it will be replied, that the purpose of the Creator is to be gathered, not from theory, but from facts; and that it is a plain fact, that the order and prosperity of society, which God must be supposed to intend, require from the multitude the action of their hands, and not the improvement of their minds. I reply, that a social order, demanding the sacrifice of the mind, is very suspicious, that it cannot indeed be sanctioned by the Creator. Were I, on visiting a strange country, to see the vast majority of the people maimed, crippled, and bereft of sight, and were I told that social order required this mutilation, I should say, Perish this order. Who would not think his understanding as well as best feelings insulted, by hearing this spoken of as the intention of God? Nor ought we to look with less aversion on a social system, which can only be upheld by crippling and blinding the Minds of the people.

But to come nearer to the point. Are labor and self-culture irreconcilable to each other? In the first place, we have seen that a man, in the midst of labor, may and ought to give himself to the most important improvements, that he may cultivate his sense of justice, his benevolence, and the desire of perfection. Toil is the school for these high principles; and we have here a strong presumption, that, in other respects, it does not necessarily blight the soul. Next we have seen, that the most fruitful sources of truth and wisdom are not books, precious as they are, but experience and observation; and these belong to all conditions. It is another important consideration, that almost all labor demands

Hosted by Google

intellectual activity, and is best carried on by those who invigorate their minds; so that the two interests, toil and self-culture, are friends to each other. It is Mind, after all, which does the work of the world, so that the more there is of mind, the more work will be accomplished. A man, in proportion as he is intelligent, makes a given force accomplish a greater task, makes skill take the place of muscles, and, with less labor, gives a better product. Make men intelligent, and they become inventive. They find shorter processes. Their knowledge of nature helps them to turn its laws to account, to understand the substances on which they work, and to seize on useful hints, which experience continually furnishes. It is among workmen, that some of the most useful machines have been contrived. Spread education, and, as the history of this country shows, there will be no bounds to useful inventions. You think, that a man without culture will do all the better what you call the drudgery of life. Go then to the Southern plantation. There the slave is brought up to be a mere drudge. He is robbed of the rights of a man, his whole spiritual nature is starved, that he may work, and do nothing but work; and in that slovenly agriculture, in that worn-out soil, in the rude state of the mechanic arts, you may find a comment on your doctrine, that, by degrading men, you make them more productive laborers.

But it is said, that any considerable education lifts men above their work, makes them look with disgust on their trades as mean and low, makes drudgery intolerable. I reply, that a man becomes interested in labor, just in proportion as the mind works with the hand. An enlightened farmer, who understands agricultural

Hosted by Google

chemistry, the laws of vegetation, the structure of plants, the properties of manures, the influences of climate, who looks intelligently on his work, and brings his knowledge to bear on exigencies, is a much more cheerful, as well as more dignified laborer, than the peasant, whose mind is akin to the clod on which he treads, and whose whole life is the same dull, unthinking, unimproving toil. But this is not all. Why is it, I ask, that we call manual labor low, that we associate with it the idea of meanness, and think that an intelligent people must scorn it? The great reason is, that, in most countries, so few intelligent people have been engaged in it. Once let cultivated men plough, and dig, and follow the commonest labors, and ploughing, digging, and trades, will cease to be mean. It is the man who determines the dignity of the occupation, not the occupation which measures the dignity of the man. Physicians and surgeons perform operations less cleanly than fall to the lot of most mechanics. I have seen a distinguished chemist covered with dust like a laborer. Still these men were not degraded. Their intelligence gave dignity to their work, and so our laborers, once educated, will give dignity to their toils.—Let me add, that I see little difference in point of dignity, between the various vocations of men. When I see a clerk, spending his days in adding figures, perhaps merely copying, or a teller of a bank counting money, or a merchant selling shoes and hides, I cannot see in these occupations greater respectableness than in making leather, shoes, or furniture. I do not see in them greater intellectual activity than in several trades. A man in the fields seems to have more chances of improvement in his work, than a man behind the counter, or a man driving the quill. It is the sign of a narrow

Hosted by Google

mind, to imagine, as many seem to do, that there is a repugnance between the plain, coarse exterior of a laborer, and mental culture, especially the more refining culture. The laborer, under his dust and sweat, carries the grand elements of humanity, and he may put forth ts highest powers. I doubt not, there is as genuine enthusiasm in the contemplation of nature, and in the perusal of works of genius, under a homespun garb as under finery. We have heard of a distinguished author, who never wrote so well, as when he was full dressed for company. But profound thought, and poetical inspiration, have most generally visited men, when, from narrow circumstances or negligent habits, the rent coat and shaggy face have made them quite unfit for polished saloons. A man may see truth, and may be thrilled with beauty, in one costume or dwelling as well as another; and he should respect himself the more, for the hardships under which his intellectual force has been developed.

But it will be asked, how can the laboring classes find time for self-culture? I answer, as I have already intimated, that an earnest purpose finds time or makes time. It seizes on spare moments, and turns larger fragments of leisure to golden account. A man, who follows his calling with industry and spirit, and uses his earnings economically, will always have some portion of the day at command; and it is astonishing, how fruitful of improvement a short season becomes, when eagerly seized and faithfully used. It has often been observed, that they, who have most time at their disposal, profit by it least. A single hour in the day, steadily given to the study of an interesting subject, brings unexpected accumulations of knowledge. The improvements made by

Hosted by Google

well-disposed pupils, in many of our country schools, which are open but three months in the year, and in our Sunday-schools, which are kept but one or two hours in the week, show what can be brought to pass by slender means. The affections, it is said, sometimes crowd years into moments, and the intellect has something of the same power. Volumes have not only been read, but written, in flying journeys. I have known a man of vigorous intellect, who had enjoyed few advantages of early education, and whose mind was almost engrossed by the details of an extensive business, but who composed a book of much original thought, in steam-boats and on horseback, while visiting distant customers. The succession of the seasons gives to many of the working class opportunities for intellectual improvement. The winter brings leisure to the husbandman, and winter evenings to many laborers in the city. Above all, in Christian countries, the seventh day is released from toil. The seventh part of the year, no small portion of existence, may be given by almost every one to intellectual and moral culture. Why is it that Sunday is not made a more effectual means of improvement? Undoubtedly the seventh day is to have a religious character; but religion connects itself with all the great subjects of human thought, and leads to and aids the study of all. God is in nature. God is in history. Instruction in the works of the Creator, so as to reveal his perfection in their harmony, beneficence, and grandeur; instruction in the histories of the church and the world, so as to show in all events his moral government, and to bring out the great moral lessons in which human life abounds; instruction in the lives of philanthropists, of saints, of men eminent for piety and virtue; all these branches of teach-

Hosted by Google

ing enter into religion, and are appropriate to Sunday; and, through these, a vast amount of knowledge may be given to the people. Sunday ought not to remain the dull and fruitless season that it now is to multitudes. It may be clothed with a new interest and a new sanctity. It may give a new impulse to the nation's soul. — I have thus shown, that time may be found for improvement; and the fact is, that, among our most improved people, a considerable part consists of persons, who pass the greatest portion of every day at the desk, in the counting-room, or in some other sphere, chained to tasks which have very little tendency to expand the mind. In the progress of society, with the increase of machinery, and with other aids which intelligence and philanthropy will multiply, we may expect that more and more time will be redeemed from manual labor, for intellectual and social occupations.

But some will say, "Be it granted that the working classes may find some leisure; should they not be allowed to spend it in relaxation? Is it not cruel, to summon them from toils of the hand to toils of the mind? They have earned pleasure by the day's toil, and ought to partake it." Yes, let them have pleasure. Far be it from me to dry up the fountains, to blight the spots of verdure, where they refresh themselves after life's labors. But I maintain, that self-culture multiplies and increases their pleasures, that it creates new capacities of enjoyment, that it saves their leisure from being, what it too often is, dull and wearisome, that it saves them from rushing for excitement to indulgences destructive to body and soul. It is one of the great benefits of self-improvement, that it raises a people above the gratifications of the brute, and gives them pleasures

Hosted by Google

worthy of men. In consequence of the present intellectual culture of our country, imperfect as it is, a vast amount of enjoyment is communicated to men, women, and children, of all conditions, by books, an enjoyment unknown to ruder times. At this moment, a number of gifted writers are employed in multiplying entertaining works. Walter Scott, a name conspicuous among the brightest of his day, poured out his inexhaustible mind in fictions, at once so sportive and thrilling, that they have taken their place among the delights of all civilized nations. How many millions have been chained to his pages! How many melancholy spirits has he steeped in forgtfulness of their cares and sorrows! What multitudes, wearied by their day's work, have owed some bright evening hours and balmier sleep to his magical creations! And not only do fictions give pleasure. In proportion as the mind is cultivated, it takes delight in history and biography, in descriptions of nature, in travels, in poetry, and even graver works. Is the laborer then defrauded of pleasure by improvement? There is another class of gratifications to which self-culture introduces the mass of the people. I refer to lectures, discussions, meetings of associations for benevolent and literary purposes, and to other like methods of passing the evening, which every year is multiplying among us. A popular address from an enlightened man, who has the tact to reach the minds of the people, is a high gratification, as well as a source of knowledge. The profound silence in our public halls, where these lectures are delivered to crowds, shows that cultivation is no foe to enjoyment.—I have a strong hope, that by the progress of intelligence, taste, and morals among all portions of society, a class of public amusements will grow

Hosted by Google

up among us, bearing some resemblance to the theatre, but purified from the gross evils which degrade our present stage, and which, I trust, will seal its ruin. Dramatic performances and recitations are means of bringing the mass of the people into a quicker sympathy with a writer of genius, to a profounder comprehension of his grand, beautiful, touching conceptions, than can be effected by the reading of the closet. No commentary throws such a light on a great poem or any impassioned work of literature, as the voice of a reader or speaker, who brings to the task a deep feeling of his author and rich and various powers of expression. A crowd, electrified by a sublime thought, or softened into a humanizing sorrow, under such a voice, partake a pleasure at once exquisite and refined; and I cannot but believe, that this and other amusements, at which the delicacy of woman and the purity of the Christian can take no offence, are to grow up under a higher social culture. — Let me only add, that, in proportion as culture spreads among a people, the cheapest and commonest of all pleasures, conversation, increases in delight. This, after all, is the great amusement of life, cheering us round our hearths, often cheering our work, stirring our hearts gently, acting on us like the balmy air or the bright light of heaven, so silently and continually, that we hardly think of its influence. This source of happiness is too often lost to men of all classes, for want of knowledge, mental activity, and refinement of feeling; and do we defraud the laborer of his pleasure, by recommending to him improvements which will place the daily, hourly, blessings of conversation within his reach?

I have thus considered some of the common objec-

Hosted by Google

tions which start up when the culture of the mass of men is insisted on, as the great end of society. For myself, these objections seem worthy little notice. The doctrine is too shocking to need refutation, that the great majority of human beings, endowed as they are with rational and immortal powers, are placed on earth, simply to toil for their own animal subsistence, and to minister to the luxury and elevation of the few. It is monstrous, it approaches impiety, to suppose that God has placed insuperable barriers to the expansion of the free, illimitable soul. True, there are obstructions in the way of improvement. But in this country, the chief obstructions lie, not in our lot, but in ourselves, not in outward hardships, but in our worldly and sensual propensities; and one proof of this is, that a true self-culture is as little thought of on exchange as in the workshop, as little among the prosperous as among those of narrower conditions. The path to perfection is difficult to men in every lot; there is no royal road for rich or poor. But difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict. And how much has it already overcome! Under what burdens of oppression has it made its way for ages! What mountains of difficulty has it cleared! And with all this experience, shall we say, that the progress of the mass of men is to be despaired of, that the chains of bodily necessity are too strong and ponderous to be broken by the mind, that servile, unimproving drudgery is the unalterable condition of the multitude of the human race?

I conclude with recalling to you the happiest feature of our age, and that is, the progress of the mass of the people in intelligence, self-respect, and all the comforts

Hosted by Google

of life. What a contrast does the present form with past times! Not many ages ago, the nation was the property of one man, and all its interests were staked in perpetual games of war, for no end but to build up his family, or to bring new territories under his yoke. Society was divided into two classes, the high-born and the vulgar, separated from one another by a great gulf, as impassable as that between the saved and the lost. The people had no significance as individuals, but formed a mass, a machine, to be wielded at pleasure by their lords. In war, which was the great sport of the times, those brave knights, of whose prowess we hear, cased themselves and their horses in armour, so as to be almost invulnerable, whilst the common people on foot were left, without protection, to be hewn in pieces or trampled down by their betters. Who, that compares the condition of Europe a few years ago, with the present state of the world, but must bless God for the change. The grand distinction of modern times is, the emerging of the people from brutal degradation, the gradual recognition of their rights, the gradual diffusion among them of the means of improvement and happiness, the creation of a new power in the state, the power of the people. And it is worthy remark, that this revolution is due in a great degree to religion, which, in the hands of the crafty and aspiring, had bowed the multitude to the dust, but which, in the fulness of time, began to fulfil its mission of freedom. It was religion, which by teaching men their near relation to God, awakened in them the consciousness of their importance as individuals. It was the struggle for religious rights, which opened men's eyes to all their rights. It was resistance to religious usurpation,

Hosted by Google

which led men to withstand political oppression. It was religious discussion, which roused the minds of all classes to free and vigorous thought. It was religion which armed the martyr and patriot in England against arbitrary power, which braced the spirits of our fathers against the perils of the ocean and wilderness, and sent them to found here the freest and most equal state on earth.

Let us thank God for what has been gained. But let us not think every thing gained. Let the people feel that they have only started in the race. How much remains to be done! What a vast amount of ignorance, intemperance, coarseness, sensuality, may still be found in our community! What a vast amount of mind is palsied and lost! When we think, that every house might be cheered by intelligence, disinterestedness, and refinement, and then remember, in how many houses the higher powers and affections of human nature are buried as in tombs, what a darkness gathers over society! And how few of us are moved by this moral desolation? How few understand, that to raise the depressed, by a wise culture, to the dignity of men, is the highest end of the social state? Shame on us, that the worth of a fellow-creature is so little felt.

I would, that I could speak with an awakening voice to the people, of their wants, their privileges, their responsibilities. I would say to them, You cannot, without guilt and disgrace, stop where you are. The past and the present call on you to advance. Let what you have gained be an impulse to something higher. Your nature is too great to be crushed. You were not created what you are, merely to toil, eat, drink, and sleep, like the inferior animals. If you will, you can rise.

Hosted by Google

No power in society, no hardship in your condition can depress you, keep you down, in knowledge, power, virtue, influence, but by your own consent. Do not be lulled to sleep by the flatteries which you hear, as if your participation in the national sovereignty made you equal to the noblest of your race. You have many and great deficiencies to be remedied; and the remedy lies, not in the ballot-box, not in the exercise of your political powers, but in the faithful education of yourselves and your children. These truths you have often heard and slept over. Awake! Resolve earnestly on Self-culture. Make yourselves worthy of your free institutions, and strengthen and perpetuate them by your intelligence and your virtues.

END OF VOL. II.

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google